

WALT
MASON'S

Business

❑❑❑ Prose ❑❑❑

❑ Poems ❑





Class PS3525

Book .A823B8
1911

Copyright N^o

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.





B u s i n e s s
Prose—Poems





WALT MASON

B U S I N E S S P R O S E - P O E M S

B y W A L T M A S O N

11

Wood Engraving by GUSTAVUS BAUMAN

Illustration by WILLIAM STEVENS



G E O R G E M A T T H E W A D A M S
C H I C A G O

75352.5
A823 E8
1911

Copyright, 1911, by George Matthew Adams.
Registered in Canada in accordance with the
Copyright Law. Entered at Stationers' Hall,
London. All rights reserved.

"UNCLE WALT," containing 189 of Walt
Mason's most famous Prose-Poems, \$1.25 net.

"We need more of this kind of philosophy—better to sing a
nubilate than a miserere."

—HON. CHAMP CLARK.

"His Prose-Poems exercise your liver by making you
laugh. His wit burbles and gurgles like a Kansas creek
where the bullheads gambol."

—ELBERT HUBBARD.

"Walt Mason has a distinct place in contemporary litera-
ture. His creed is the wisdom of the people. He is doing a
man's work in the world, making life brighter and more
cheerful and more sensible in this vale of tears. Millions in
money could do no more—if as much—as this man does at
his day's work.

—WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE.

He is the greatest rhymster in the world.

—"ED" HOWE.

GEORGE MATTHEW ADAMS, Publisher,
Peoples Gas Building, Chicago.

C o n t e n t s

Nero's Fiddle	17
The Great Men.....	18
Clothes and Men.....	19
Ignorance	20
Toothache	21
Trifling Things	22
He Who Forgets.....	23
Only a Dream.....	24
Battling Nelson	25
The Best We Can.....	26
The Cussing Habit.....	27
Bill Collectors	28
The Substitutes	29
Letting It Alone	30
The Penny Saved.....	31
The Welcome Man.....	32
The Foolish Hen.....	34
The Clock	35
Time is Busy.....	36
The Workers	37
Politeness	38
The Dog Story.....	39
Knowledge by Mail.....	40
John	41
Saw Wood	42
An Easy Job.....	43
The Foolish Husband.....	44
Ambition	45
The Tired Man's Sleep.....	46
Advice on Going.....	47
To-Morrow	48
The Statistician	49
Hours and Ponies.....	50
Speed Maniacs	51
Help Wanted	52
The Smiling Man.....	53
Various Merchants	54
The Schoolmaster	55
The Burden of Wealth.....	56
The Reliable Man.....	57
Get Busy	58
The Two Merchants.....	59
Knowing Your Trade.....	60
The Dark Days.....	61
The Salesman	62
Shining Promises	63
The Sturdy Yeoman.....	64

C o n t e n t s

The Just-as-Goods	65
Excelsior	66
The Untidy Store.....	67
Signatures	68
The Honest Grocer	69
The Preacher's Snap.....	70
Thomas Edison	71
Forget It	72
The Unemployed	73
My Wheelbarrow	74
Early Birds	75
An Epitaph	76
Business and Sentiment.....	77
The Usual Luck.....	78
Salting Them Down.....	79
The Law-Books	80
The Human Head.....	81
The Real Terror.....	82
The Era of Progress.....	83
Pegging Away	84
The Coin Chaser.....	85
Lady Nicotine	86
The Auctioneer's Cry.....	87
Brass Tacks	88
The Time Killer.....	89
The Idle Hen.....	90
Admirable Crichton	91
The Man Who Waits.....	92
Sir Walter Raleigh.....	93
Willie & Johnnie.....	94
A Bale of Hay.....	95
Dreams and Grub.....	96
Mary's Lamb	97
Toiler and Dreamer.....	98
Whiskers	99
The Dipper	100
The Jealous	101
Salted Samoleons.....	102
It Might Be Worse.....	103
The Agents	104
Trouble Either Way.....	105
The Commercial Basis.....	106
Once in a While.....	107
Plutocrat and Poet.....	108
Saturday Night	109
Wanderlust	110
The Tightwad	111
The Important Man.....	112

C o n t e n t s

The Showy Horse.....	113
Pretty Good Schemes.....	114
A Rise in Value.....	115
Dry Weather	116
Killing Time	117
The Discontented	118
The Breadwinner	119
Evenings at Home.....	120
The Simple Life.....	121
Retrospection	122
Contentment	123
Weary Old Age.....	124
Man's Errands	125
Soliloquy of Croesus.....	126
Conscience	127
Richard Roe	128
The Age of Invention.....	129
In the Garden.....	130
The Secret of Health.....	131
Ben Davis Apples.....	132
Good Advice	133
As to Failure.. ..	134
Back to the Farm.....	135
The Rule of Life.....	136
The Days of Youth.....	137
The Sphere of Genius.....	138
The Dissatisfied Clerk.....	139
The Two Parents.....	140
Discouraging	141
Behind the Counter.....	142
The Moneyless Man.....	143
The Great Remedy.....	144
Before and After.....	145
The Workers	146
The Wise Old Man.....	147
The Healer	148
Job's Patience	149
Money and Lives.....	150
Lady Police	151
Mortal Plans	152
The Two Toilers.....	153
In the Boneyard.....	154
A Few Don'ts.....	155
"Grimes' Goldens"	156
The Bullied Witness	157
Worth a Million.....	158
Harvest Home	159
The Tired Optimist.....	160

C o n t e n t s

Success	161
Getting a Habit	162
The Harvest	163
Saturday Night	164
Croesus	165
Pipe Dreams	166
The Hardluck Man	167
Selfishness	168
The Grouch	169
Dreary Old Age	170
Brooding	171
The Misanthrope	172
The Store Talksmith	173
The Eminent Divine	174
In the Kitchen	175
Weariness	176
Worth While	177
Coronation	178
National Anthems	179
The True Reward	180
The Rash Lover	181
Nat Goodwin	182
Hunting Grief	183
Foolish Anger	184
Spare the Flies	185
The Healer	186
The Suffragists	187
What is Beer	188

The High Priest of Horse Sense

AN eminent dramatist said quite recently that success in play-writing is the visualizing of something that is already in the mind of the public.

In other words, people like to be told what they already know.

Hence the enduring popularity of Walt Mason.

He says for thousands of people, in plain bed-rock vernacular, the very things they have been wanting to say, consequently every reader, when he concludes one of these poems, in which the music is concealed as artfully as in the new style of talking-machine, says with a sigh of satisfaction, "That's the gospel truth and well put, and I was about to say the same thing when he interrupted me."

The High Priest of Horse Sense

Walt Mason is the high priest of horse sense and also he is a literary workman. The combination is unusual and therefore his output is essentially different. It is what we call high-grade stuff.

Heeye Ade

*HAZELDEN FARM
BROOK, INDIANA*

To
William Allen White.

This little bale of business rhymes
And knocks and boosts and kindred crimes
Is handed, as a token
Of gratitude; he helped me stick
On Pegasus through thin and thick,
And watched the critter buck and kick
Until I had it broken.

Walter Mason



*"There he sat and played 'Bedelia'
heedless of the fiery storm."*

Business Prose - Poems

Nero's Fiddle.

WE have often roasted Nero that he played the violin, while his native Rome was burning and the firemen raised a din; there he sat and played "Bedelia," heedless of the fiery storm, while the fire chief pranced and sweated in his neat red uniform. And I often think that Nero had a pretty level head; would the fire have been extinguished had he fussed around instead? Would the fire insurance folks have loosened up a shekel more, had old Nero squirted water on some grocer's cellar door? When there comes a big disaster, people straightway lose their wits; they go round with hands a-wringing, sweating blood and throwing fits; but the wise man sits and fiddles, plays a tune from end to end, for it never pays to worry over things you cannot mend. It is good to offer battle when catastrophes advance, it is well to keep on scrapping while a fellow has a chance; but when failure is as certain as the coming of the dusk, then it's wise to take your fiddle and fall back on "Money Musk."

Business Prose - Poems

The Great Men

LIVES of great men all remind us that it pays to advertise; every day of life should find us making all the people wise, to our coming and our going—nothing comes to him who's coy; all our wares we should be showing, if the limelight we'd enjoy. Let us seek the bland reporters if they do not hunt for us; seek them in their dismal quarters, in their inky, pasty muss; giving them our warm opinions of all things beneath the sky; over all the earth's dominions let imagination fly. Famous men? The crowds adore 'em! Lions thrive in every land! Let us keep our names before 'em, and they'll cheer to beat the band! Let our pictures oft be printed, lest the people should forget, even though the section tinted is the only place we get. Better have our faces beaming on the pink or yellow page, than to have the people dreaming that we are no more the rage. Advertising! Let the grocer pay for space to bill his name; shall we do it? Not for Joe, sir! That is not the Great Men's game; we are onto smoother capers than the merchants often see; we have learned to work the papers, and to get our booming free.

Business Prose - Poems

Clothes and Men.

I BLEW into a clothing store, to buy a sock, and nothing more. There stood a dummy in the aisle; a wooden thing with graven smile, all dressed up in a suit of clothes, and glasses perched upon its nose. A clerk came up to wait on me; as fresh a youth as you might see. I said: "I want to buy a sock, if you have such a thing in stock." "We surely have," he said: "I s'pose you do not want a suit of clothes?" "I said a sock—no other junk." "I'd like to sell you yonder trunk; it's made of zinc, with leather streaked——" "I want a sock!" I fairly shrieked; "dad bust it, sir, you let me be—I'll have that dummy wait on me! Though modeled on an awkward plan, I venture he's a gentleman. He will not try to sell a clock to one who's asking for a sock; he won't insult me to my nose by hinting that I'm needing clothes. He will not offer me a trunk, or any other ding-donged junk, when all I want beneath this roof is just a bolster for my hoof. The boss of these dodgasted works should let the dummies act as clerks, and stand the clerks along the aisles, exhibiting the latest styles!"

Business Prose - Poems

Ignorance.

IT was the steenth of August, the day was close and warm; I stepped into a school house to watch the kids perform; and I had sticks of candy and other treasures rare, to hand out to the children whose showing was most fair. The teacher asked them questions as simple as could be: "What town in Asia Minor is on the Irish Sea?" "A farmer has three horses; of one he is bereft; two others are impounded—how many has he left?" "If forty thousand tigers, in just a half a day, will drink ten tons of water and eat ten stacks of hay, how many one-eyed soldiers would build five miles of fence, when eggs and rotten apples are sold at fifteen cents?" The children, bright and eager, gave answers every time, their energy and brightness, I thought, were most sublime. But there was one exception, a youth with forehead low, who merely scowled and mumbled his answer: "I don't know." His presence cast a shadow upon the cheerful scene; his answers shamed the teacher, and made the school seem mean; and then I sprung the candy—a chunk for every one, except the ignoramus—of course that youth got none. And seldom does the candy in this world's battle go to any weary bonehead who answers "I don't know."

Business Prose - Poems

Toothache.

NOW my weary heart is breaking,
for my left hand tooth is aching,
with a harsh, persistent rumble
that is keeping folks awake; hollowed out by long erosion, it, with spasm and explosion, seems resolved to show the public how a dog-gone tooth can ache. Now it's quivering or quaking; now it's doing fancy aching, then it shoots some Roman candles which go whizzing through my brain; now it does some lofty tumbling, then again it's merely grumbling; and anon it's showing samples of spring novelties in pain. All the time my woe increases; I have kicked a chair to pieces, but it didn't seem to soothe me or to bring my soul relief; I have stormed around the shanty till my wife and maiden auntie said they'd pull their freight and leave me full enjoyment of my grief. I have made myself so pleasant that I'm quarantined at present, and the neighbors say they'll shoot me if I venture from my door; now a voice cries: "If thou'd wentest in the first place, to a dentist—" it is strange that inspiration never came to me before!

Business Prose - Poems

Trifling Things

THE Wise Man, with some boys in tow, beheld a pin upon the ground. "My lads," he said, his face aglow, "come here and see what I have found! 'Tis but a pin, a humble pin, on which the passing thousands tread, and some unthinking men would grin, to see me lift it from its bed. And yet, my lads, the trifles count; the drops of water make the sea; the grains of sand compose the mount, and moments make eternity. Each hour to man its chances brings, but he will gain no goodly store, if he despises little things, nor sees the pin upon his floor. I stoop and grasp this little pin; I'll keep it, maybe, seven years; it yet may let the sunshine in, and brighten up a day of tears." The Wise Man bent to reach the pin, and lost his balance, with a yell; he hit the pavement with his chin; his hat into the gutter fell; he rolled into a crate of eggs, and filled the air with dismal moans, and then a dray ran o'er his legs, and broke about a gross of bones. They took him home upon a door, and there he moans—so tough he feels: "Those dad-blamed children never more will listen to my helpful spiels!"

Business Prose - Poems

He Who Forgets

THE merchant said, in caustic tones:
“James Henry Charles Augustus Jones, please get your pay and leave the store; I will not need you any more. Important chores you seem to shun; you’re always leaving work undone; and when I ask the reason why, you heave a sad and soulful sigh, and idly scratch your dome of thought, and feebly say: ‘Oh, I forgot!’ James Henry Charles Augustus Jones, this world’s a poor resort for drones, for men with heads so badly set that their long suit is to forget. No man will ever write his name upon the shining wall of fame, or soar aloft on glowing wings because he can’t remember things. I’ve noticed that such chaps as you remember when your pay is due; and when the noontime whistles throb, your memory is on the job; and when a holiday’s at hand, your recollection isn’t canned. The failures on life’s busy way, the paupers, friendless, wan and gray, throughout their bootless days, like you, forgot the things they ought to do. So take your coat, and draw your bones, James Henry Charles Augustus Jones!”

Business Prose - Poems

Only a Dream.

I WENT to roost without a dime, and there I lay for hours and dreamed that I was John D. Morganheim, and wealth into my coffers streamed. I watched my speedy minions flee to dump the bullion in the banks, and sleuths forever walked with me, protecting me from wicked cranks. The world sent forth its host of bores, and mendicants in serried squad filled all the landscape out of doors, and tried to touch me for my wad. And all the jealous plutocrats were there to get my coin away; they poked me sorely in the slats, and kept me humping, night and day. In solemn state I seemed to sup, and sleepless tossed upon my bed; and interviewers called me up and twisted everything I said. I had no pleasant hours to while away at games I loved before; I mounted guard upon my pile, and counted sacks of gold and swore. I had no friends; I had men's hate, and I suspected other men of low down schemes to swipe a crate of my long green, and then again. I had no comrades; uncles, aunts, and all my kindred eyed my till, and changed to cringing sycophants that they might figure in my will. And O, the joy when from this dream to cheerful poverty I woke! I uttered one long glad-some scream, and cried: "Thank heaven, I am broke!"

Business Prose - Poems

Battling Nelson.

IT jarred me up like everything, when Nelson met his last defeat. He left the sanctum for the ring, forsook the cloister's calm retreat to mingle swats with one Moran, a vulgar person, I am told; and now he has a damaged can, his heart is sick, his feet are cold. How often, friends, must I explain that men should not forsake their trade? It gives my heart a convex pain that my behests are not obeyed. When Battling Nelson for the press was writing gripping, vital tales, he was a stranger to distress, and happiness was his, in bales. The gems of thought dropped from his pen like diamonds of a ray serene; he soothed and cheered the souls of men and earned full many a golden bean. That sturdy yeoman, Jeffries, came from rustic scenes and vernal tints, to elevate the fighting game, and went back home again in splints. And Uncle Joe, the Danville sport, passed up his baseball team this year to prance in congress and cavort, and there he got a wooden ear. Friends, Romans, sports and fellow guys! Just watch me, while in truth I wade: The gentleman who's truly wise, will stick like beeswax to his trade!

Business Prose - Poems

The Best We Can

SAID Abe (the nation's greatest man):
"I do the very best I can; and if my
course is erring quite, no argument
can make it right, and if in righteous-
ness I'm strong, no sophistry can make it
wrong; so, be the critic foe or friend, I'll
do my best until the end." The fact is
galling to relate, but some of us cannot be
great; our ways obscure we'll have to
tread, and hustle for our daily bread; our
pictures never may be seen in Who's Who
book, or magazine; but, if upon the Day of
Doom, we come cavorting from the tomb,
when sounds the final trumpet's notes, we
won't be herded with the goats, if we can
say (and make it good): "We always did
the best we could!"

Business Prose - Poems

The Cussing Habit

THE jackal is a beastly beast; and when it hankers for a feast, it has no use for nice fresh meat; the all-fired fool would rather eat some animal that died last year; and so the jackal, far and near, is shunned by self-respecting brutes, and slugged with rocks, and bricks, and boots. And men whose language is decayed, who make profanity a trade, are like the jackal of the wild, that hunts around for things defiled. In all your rounds you'll never find a healthy, clean and gentle mind possessed by any son of wrath whose language needs a Turkish bath. On great occasions there's excuse for turning ring-tailed cusswords loose; the Father of his Country swore at Monmouth, and then cussed some more; that patient soul, the Man of Uz, with boils so thick he couldn't buzz, ripped off some language rich and brown, until old Bildad called him down. Great men, beneath some awful stroke let loose remarks that fairly smoke, and we forgive them as we write the story of their deeds of might. But little men, who swear, and swear, and thus pollute our common air, are foul and foolish as the frogs that trumpet in their native bogs.

Business Prose - Poems

Bill Collectors.

IN olden times the bill collector was masculine and loud of tongue, and he would bullyrag and hector until our nerves were all unstrung. His impudence was often ghastly, and when we kicked him from our door, he worried us, and bored us vastly, the way he stood around and swore. Collection day was then a terror, and when it came we'd groan and sigh, and walk the floor, or tear our hair or go looking for a place to die. But times have changed; the world grows better! For now a maiden, fair and bright, comes down upon the smiling debtor, and he coughs up with great delight! The girl collector doesn't bluster or threaten suits by lawyer folk; no man's so cheap that he'd disgust her by telling her that he is broke. So paying bills becomes a pleasure; I like to see the girls come in; I hand them, in a bushel measure, the good old scads that make them grin. O woman—some old bard hath said it—she fills with happiness man's cup! I stand off clerks and strain my credit, just for the joy of paying up!

Business Prose - Poems

The Substitutes.

I CALLED upon the grocer man, and asked him for a gallon can of syrup, and he cried: "Too bad! We've just sold out the last we had! But we have something just as good; this kerosene of ours has stood the fiercest tests you ever saw; and scientists lay down the law that coal oil's in a class apart; it tones the liver and the heart; it fills you full of rich, red blood, and makes your hair and whiskers bud. So throw your syrup jug away and buy some kerosene today." I smote that merchant with his scales, and soaked him with a keg of nails, and biffed him firmly with my lyre, and set his one-horse store afire. I called upon the druggist then, and wished to buy a fountain pen. "I do not keep such things," he said; "the trade in fountain pens is dead; they seldom serve you as they should—and I have something just as good. Now, I've a squirtgun here, my friend, that I can safely recommend. The London Lancet rightly claims there are no better, saner games than squirting water from a gun——." I reached across and poked him one. Is there a merchant in this land, to say: "Such goods are not on hand; there is none in this neighborhood, and there is nothing just as good?"

Business Prose - Poems

Letting It Alone

HE used to take a flowing bowl perhaps three times a day; he needed it to brace his nerves, or drive the blues away, but as for chaps who drank too much, they simply made him tired; "a drink," he said, "when feeling tough, is much to be desired; some men will never quit the game while they can raise a bone, but I can drink the old red booze, or let the stuff alone." He toddled on the downward path, and seedy grew his clothes, and like a beacon in the night flamed forth his bulbous nose; he lived on slaw and sweitzer cheese, the free lunch brand of fruits, and when he sought his downy couch he always wore his boots; "some day I'll cut it out," he said; "my will is still my own, and I can hit the old red booze, or let the stuff alone." One night a prison surgeon sat by this poor pilgrim's side, and told him that his time had come to cross the great divide. "I've known you since you were a lad," the stern physician said, "and I have watched you as you tried to paint the whole world red, and if you wish, I'll have engraved upon your churchyard stone: 'He, dying, proved that he could let the old red booze alone.'"

Business Prose - Poems

The Penny Saved

IT is wise to save the pennies when the pennies come your way, for you're more than apt to need them when arrives the rainy day; and when Famine comes a-whooping with the cross-bones on her vest, then the fellow with the bundle has the edge on all the rest. I admire the man who's saving, if he doesn't save too hard, if he doesn't think a dollar bigger than the courthouse yard; and I like to see him salting down the riches that he's struck, if he always has a quarter for the guy that's out of luck. When the winter comes upon us, yelling like a baseball fan, then it's nice to have some boodle in an old tomato can; when there's sickness in the wigwam, and we have to call the doc, then it's nice to have a package hidden in the eight-day clock; when Old Age, the hoary rascal, comes a-butting in at last, then it's nice to have some roubles that you cornered in the past; and the man who saves the pennies is a dandy and a duck—if he always has a quarter for the guy that's out of luck.

Business Prose - Poems

The Welcome Man

THERE'S a man in the world who is never turned down, wherever he chances to stray; he gets the glad hand in the populous town, or out where the farmers make hay; he's greeted with pleasure on deserts of sand, and deep in the aisles of the woods; wherever he goes there's the welcoming hand—he's The Man Who Delivers the Goods. The failures of life sit around and complain; the gods haven't treated them white; they've lost their umbrellas whenever there's rain, and they haven't their lanterns at night; men tire of the failures who fill with their sighs the air of their own neighborhoods; there's one who is greeted with love-lighted eyes—he's The Man Who Delivers the Goods. One fellow is lazy, and watches the clock, and waits for the whistle to blow; and one has a hammer, with which he will knock, and one tells a story of woe; and one, if requested to travel a mile, will measure the perches and roods; but one does his stunt with a whistle or smile—he's The Man Who Delivers the Goods. One man is afraid that he'll labor too hard—the world isn't yearning for such; and one man is always alert, on his guard, lest he put in a

B u s i n e s s P r o s e - P o e m s

The Welcome Man

minute too much; and one has a grouch or a temper that's bad, and one is a creature of moods; so it's hey for the joyous and rollicking lad—for the One Who Delivers the Goods!

Business Prose - Poems

The Foolish Hen

AN old black hen with yellow legs once "set" three months on wooden eggs; for three long months she held them down, till all the other hens in town were cackling o'er the famous jest; she wore the feathers off her breast, and saw her blooming youth depart, and broke her fond and foolish heart, and shrunk till thinner than a match—and still the blamed eggs wouldn't hatch. Her owner said she was a fool, and ducked the poor thing in a pool, and then dismissed her from his dreams, and turned to nurse his little schemes. He got poor suckers to invest their cash in rainbows in the West; he sold a lot of polar ice; he cornered prunes and raised the price; he reached for dollars everywhere, and for the truth he had no care; and honesty possessed no charm; and virtue was a false alarm. And now he's wearing prison stripes; and when the warden's whistle pipes, he plies his task with shackled legs; his schemes were much like wooden eggs. O, dead game sports and other men, are you as foolish as that hen?

Business Prose - Poems

The Clock.

I LIKED to watch the good old clock that hung upon the wall; I really think a man might walk from Cleveland to St. Paul, and not behold a smother piece of skillful craftsmanship; the wheels went round as slick as grease, and never made a slip. I dearly loved for hours to stand and watch the pendulum; and note the active minute hand, and hear the flywheel hum. I liked to hear the blamed thing strike—but on one fateful day, the boss remarked: “You’d better hike—you are not worth your hay. You’re paid to help to sell my stock, and do some other chores, but all the day you watch the clock, so chase yourself out doors.” And then he pushed me with his feet, and fanned me with a chair, and when I landed in the street my shoes were in the air. O, clocks are fascinating things, and they have lovely works, and pendulums and hands and springs, but they are bad for clerks, who yield to their seductive charm, and watch the hands go round, and listen to the loud alarm, and hear the striker pound.

Business Prose - Poems

Time Is Busy

HOW the sawed-off months are flying, speeding, scorching on their way! Soon the year will be a-dying, that we greeted yesterday! Christmas choirs their hymns were singing, but an hour or two ago, New Year's bells were gaily ringing, yesterday, across the snow, and the year is old already; gone his youthful graces all; soon his gait will be unsteady, and he'll totter to his fall. Time is busy as a faker with his little game of chance; busy as an undertaker at an Arizona dance. Time will never stop a second for the things you have to say; all his dates ahead are reckoned, he is always baling hay. Let us, then, quit loafing, creeping; let us work from sun to sun; so that when it's time for sleeping, we may say: "The chores are done!"

Business Prose - Poems

The Workers

MEN have worked and ground away, for a hundred thousand years, cutting ice and baling hay in their anguish and their tears; they have toiled and they have wrought since the universe was new, and this knowledge makes them hot—that the chores are not half through! Just as much to do to-day as ten thousand years ago—winding clocks or sifting whey, shearing hens or sawing snow! When the toilers now on earth toddle to their final sleep, other gents of sterling worth in their place must work and weep, doing all the useless chores that we foolish people do; chasing tomcats out of doors, teaching dogs to smoke and chew. We would gladly do the work till our stretch of work is done, if it were not for the shirk who is lounging in the sun; when we see him as he stands in his fav'rite loafing spot, with his idle head and hands, then it makes us pretty hot. Oh, our anger oft hath waxed o'er the work we have to do, o'er the knowledge that we're taxed to support the loafing crew.

Business Prose - Poems

Politeness

IN my youth I knew an aleck who was most exceeding smart, and his flippant way of talking often broke the hearer's heart. He was working for a grocer in a little corner store, taking down the wooden shutters, sweeping up the greasy floor, and he always answered pertly, and he had a sassy eye, and the people often asked him if he wouldn't kindly die. Oh, the festive years skedad-dled, and the children of that day, now are bent beneath life's burdens, and their hair is turning gray; and the flippant one is toiling in the same old corner store, taking down the ancient shutters, sweeping up the greasy floor. In the same old sleepy village lived a springald so polite that to hear him answer questions was a genuine delight; he was working in a foundry where they dealt in eggs and cheese, and the work was hard and tiresome, but he always tried to please. And to-day he's boss of thousands, and his salary's sky high—and his manner's just as pleasant as it was in days gone by. It's an idle, trifling story, and you doubtless think it flat, but its moral might be pasted with some profit in your hat.

Business Prose - Poems

A Dog Story

A LARGE black dog, of stately mien, was walking o'er the village green, on some important errand bent; a little cur, not worth a cent, observed him passing by, and growled, and barked a while, and yapped, and howled. The big one did not deign a look, but walked along, like prince or dook. The cur remarked, beneath its breath: "That big four-flusher's scared to death! Those great big brutes are never game; now just watch Fido climb his frame!" The big black dog went stalking on, as calm and tranquil as the dawn; he knew the cur was at his heels; he heard its yaps and snarls and squeals, and yet he never looked around, or blinked an eye, or made a sound; his meditations had a tone that mangy pups have never known. The cur, unnoticed, lost all fear; it grabbed the big dog by the ear; the latter paused just long enough to take the small one by the scruff, and shake him gently to and fro; and then he let poor Fido go, and said, in quiet tones: "Now get!" And Fido's doubtless running yet. Suppose you see if you can nail the moral hidden in this tale.

Business Prose - Poems

Knowledge By Mail

WHEN I was young and fresh and ruddy, and full of snap and vim, my parents used to make me study until my head would swim.

I sat upon the schoolhouse bleachers, with pencil, book and slate, while sundry bald and weary teachers drilled knowledge through my pate. For some quick method I was yearning, some easy path to tread; "there is no royal road to learning," the bald old teachers said; "stick closely to the printed pages, all idleness eschew, and then perhaps, in future ages, you'll know a thing or two." And when I left the school and college, to climb life's toilsome hill, I found my little store of knowledge would barely fill the bill. But nowadays the world moves quicker than in the long ago; old-fashioned methods make us snicker, they were so crude and slow. By sending seven wooden dollars to Messrs. Freaks and Freaks, they'll make our children finished scholars, and do it in three weeks. So let us close the schools and leave 'em to ruin and decay, and take the books and maps and heave 'em a million miles away; for now the kids take erudition in three-grain capsule form; the teacher loses the position that he so long kept warm.

Business Prose - Poems

John.

I HIRED a toiler whose name was John, to come with his weapons and mow my lawn, for long green whiskers were growing there; it badly needed some tender care. And John arrived at the break of day, and whittled grass in a cheerful way; the job was fierce, for the weeds had grown, and the dog had scattered some chunks of bone, but John, he labored to beat the band, and shaved that lawn with a master hand. He named his price when the work was o'er, and I gladly coughed up a quarter more. And whenever I find that my lawn is due for a good clean shave or a dry shampoo, I'll hunt up John, if he's still on earth, and pay him more than the job is worth. I'll hunt up John if I have to trot from the court house clear to the dumping spot, for he does his work as a workman should, and doesn't quit till he finds it good. The streets are haunted by shiftless men, who seek employment and seek again; they say that jobs are as hard to find as pearls of price in a melon rind; their hopes are hazy, their chances gone—for most employers are hunting John!

Business Prose - Poems

Saw Wood!

SOMETIMES the saw is dull and squeaks like thunder, the wood is crooked-grained and full of knots; sometimes the sawbuck creaks and falls from under, and trouble seems to come in wholesale lots. And t'other man, the gent across the alley, is sawing pine that cuts as slick as lard; he jollies you with merry quip and sally, which makes your stunt seem doubly, trebly hard. But keep at work—don't waste your time in jawing! Saw wood, saw wood, and never raise a whine! The other chap tomorrow may be sawing elm knots while you are carving Norway pine!

Business Prose - Poems

An Easy Job.

IT isn't hard to win renown as having not a friend in town. Just have an ever ready sneer to spring when others' names you hear. And if you hear some fellow praised for deeds that left the village dazed, insist that he's a false alarm, and doing far less good than harm. If neighbors prosper more than you, just run them down, the long day through; insist that all their wealth was made by fooling with the board of trade. Say bitter things behind the backs of men who treat you smooth as wax. Distrust men's motives and insist that all hearts have a crooked twist, that all are cheats, and out for pelf—all men are frauds, except yourself. And always raise a noisy storm when people speak of a reform. Old ways are always best, you know, and any progress here below, is just the dream of foolish men, and grafters pining for the pen. Protest and kick, and sneer and growl, and wear a large relentless scowl, insist the world is on the bum—and folks will hate to see you come.

Business Prose - Poems

The Foolish Husband.

HE toiled and sweated half his life to hang rich garments on his wife. "I haven't time to cut a dash," he said, "but I will blow the cash to let those swelled-up neighbors know that I have got the cash to blow." And so his good wife wore her furs, and dress parade was always hers; she had her gems from near and far, and glittered like an auto-car; she had a new and wondrous gown for every "function" in the town; her life seemed sunny, gay and glad, this wife who was her husband's ad. One night, his day of labor o'er he found her weeping at the door, and when he asked her to explain, she stopped a while the briny rain, and cried: "This life my spirit fags! I'm tired of wearing flossy rags! I'm tired of chasing through the town, a dummy in a costly gown! I'd rather wear a burlap sack, or leather flynet on my back—and have you with me as of yore—than all the sables in the store! And if you really love your wife, you'll get back to the simple life. Don't try to gather all the dough that's minted in this world below; just earn enough to pay the freight, and let us live in simple state, in some neat shanty far away from pomp and fuss and vain display—some hut among the cockleburs, remote from jewelry and furs!"

Business Prose - Poems

Ambition

WHEN I hear a noble singer reeling off entrancing noise, then I bend in admiration, and his music never cloys. And I feel a high ambition as a singer to excel, and I put my voice in training, and I prance around and yell; oh, I dish up trills and warbles, and I think, throughout the day, that I'll have Caruso faded ere a month has rolled away. Then the neighbors come and see me, and they give me stern reproof, saying I am worse than forty yellow cats upon the roof. When I see a splendid painting it appeals to brain and heart, and I blow myself for brushes and decide to follow Art. With a can of yellow ochre and a jug of turpentine, I produce some masterpieces that would make old Rubens pine, and I talk about Perspective and the whatness of the whence, till a neighbor comes and asks me what I'll take to paint his fence. When I read a rattling volume I invest in pens and ink, and prepare to write some chapters that will make the nation think; and I rear some Vandyke whiskers and neglect to cut my hair, and I read up Bulwer Lytton for some good old oaths to swear; when I get the proper bearing, and the literary style, then I'm asked to write a pamphlet booming some ones castor ile!

Business Prose - Poems

The Tired Man's Sleep.

NOW the long, long day is fading,
and the hush of dusk is here, and
the stars begin parading, each
one in its distant sphere; and
the city's strident voices dwindle to a gentle hum, and the heart of man rejoices that the hour of rest has come. Thrown away is labor's fetter, when the day has reached its close; nothing in the world is better than a weary man's repose. Nothing in the world is sweeter than the sleep the toiler finds, while the ravening moskeeter fusses at the window blinds. Nothing 'neath the moon can wake him, short of cannon cracker's roar; if you'd rouse him you must shake him till you dump him on the floor. Idle people seek their couches, seek their beds to toss and weep, for a demon on them crouches, driving from their eyes the sleep. And the weary hours they number, and they cry, in tones distraught: "For a little wad of slumber, I would give a house and lot!" When the long, long day is dying, and you watch the twinkling stars, knowing that you'll soon be lying, sleeping like a train of cars, be, then, thankful, without measure; be as thankful as you can; you have nailed as great a treasure as the gods have given man!

Business Prose - Poems

Advice on Going.

GO west, young man, as Greeley said, and carve out wealth and fame; if you're equipped with heart and head, you'll surely win the game. If you are brave and staunch and true, ambition in your breast, all things will surely come to you; so, then, young man, go west. Go east, young man, and win renown, the field's beyond compare; the toiler in the field or town may gain his laurels there. The youth who'd take a higher way than that of clod or beast will rise to noble heights some day; so, then, young man, go east. Go south, young man, to virgin field, and build yourself a home, returning only on your shield, as did the youth of Rome. Go to your work with willing hands and calm and restful mouth, and fortune waits for your commands; go south, good youth, go south! Go north—what boots it where you wend? All regions are the same; the earnest, honest soul, my friend, will win an honored name. Each country has its rich reward and gladly brings it forth for him who labors well and hard—go east, or west, or north!

Business Prose - Poems

Tomorrow.

TOMORROW," said the languid man, "I'll have my life insured, I guess; I know it is the safest plan, to save my children from distress."

And when the morrow came around, they placed him gently in a box; at break of morning he was found as dead as Julius Cæsar's ox. His widow now is scrubbing floors, and washing shirts, and splitting wood, and doing fifty other chores, that she may rear her wailing brood. "Tomorrow," said the careless jay, "I'll take an hour, and make my will; and then if I should pass away, the wife and kids will know no ill." The morrow came, serene and nice, the weather mild, with signs of rain; the careless jay was placed on ice, embalming fluid in his brain. Alas, alas, poor careless jay! The lawyers got his pile of cash; his wife is toiling night and day, to keep the kids in clothes and hash. Tomorrow is the ambushed walk avoided by the circumspect. Tomorrow is the fatal rock on which a million ships are wrecked.

Business Prose - Poems

The Statistician.

TWO men were wrangling o'er the tariff; one called the other man a seraph, or something stronger yet; and after further dark blue phrases they punched each other's heads like blazes, till wet with blood and sweat. One hit the other with a shutter and knocked him endways in the gutter, with melancholy chug; and there, with wondrous wind and bottom, they scrapped till peelers came and got 'em, and put 'em in the jug. Then up there came the statistician, who stood, with pencil in position, and figured on a plank; "the energy those men expended," he said, "before the scrap was ended, would turn a grindstone crank, three hundred million times, exactly; I've put the figures here compactly—they loom up fine as silk; that energy, if put to turning another crank, would do the churning of fifty tons of milk. That energy, of which I'm jawing, if harnessed down and put to sawing, would cut ten cords of oak; or it would pump two miles of water, or, in a butcher's yard, would slaughter twelve steers, and that's no joke. That energy, I say, dog-gone it, would operate, with wheels upon it, a coal mine, fifty years"—but here his eloquence forsook him, and then his keepers came and took him, and held him by the ears.

Business Prose - Poems

Hours and Ponies

EVERY hour that's gone's a dead one, and another comes and goes; in the graveyard of the ages hours will find their last repose; and the hour that's come and vanished never can be used again; you may long to live it over, but the longing is in vain. Lasso, then, the hour that's with you, ride it till its back is sore; you can have it sixty minutes—sixty minutes, and no more. Make it earn its board and lodging, make it haul your private wain, for when once it slips its halter it will never work again. So the hours, like spotted ponies, trot along in single file, and we haven't sense to catch them and to work them for a mile; we just loaf around and watch them, sitting idly in the sun, and the darkness comes and finds us with but mighty little done.

Business Prose - Poems

Speed Maniacs.

I LIKE to read the daily paper, so many stories in it are: "James Jinks, the well known linen draper, was run down by an auto car. His head was split, his neck was broken, he had no chance of being cured; the doctor heard his last words spoken—"I should have had my life insured!" "Today, while Rufus Jones was speeding, in his new white and gold machine, he left a swath of dead and bleeding pedestrians where he had been." "We're not surprised that Jimmie Teeple is feeling proud and blithe and gay; he only maimed a dozen people while riding in his car today." "Hank Simpson's car, the owner in it, was out to make some record whirls; while traveling a mile a minute, it killed three boys and seven girls. There ought to be a law forbidding the kids from going on the street; at any hour an auto, skidding, may wound or kill them, and repeat." "The motorists are holding rallies, demanding laws to guard their rights; let folks on foot go through the alleys and leave the streets for honking wights."

Business Prose - Poems

Help Wanted

I NEED a man," said the Merchant Prince, "to work in my stately store; I'll pay him well when he starts to work, and soon I will pay him more. I want a man with a spirit clean, and an honest, hopeful face; I want a man with an earnest wish to climb to the highest place. I have sought him high, I have sought him low, and I'm almost in despair; I've hunted all through the billiard halls, and I didn't find him there. I want a man with a purpose high that always he keeps in view; I want a man with a soul attuned to the things that are good and true; a youth who knows that the rich rewards are not for the idle shirk; a youth who comes from a pleasant home, and comes with a zest for work; I have sought this youth till my feet are tired, and my mind is filled with care; I looked for him in the grog bazaars, and I didn't find him there. I want a youth with a healthy mind, who sees that the world is good, who knows that the men who win belong to industry's brotherhood; I want a youth who would rather own a dime that is fairly earned, than rolls of gold that were won at night in a room where the cards are turned; alas, alas! such a golden youth in this weary old world is rare! I've looked and looked where the loafers rest, and I didn't find him there."

Business Prose - Poems

The Smiling Man

I KNOW of a man who is smiling, all day, like a basket of greens; the mirth in his face is beguiling—he beats all the grinning machines. He smiles, for it brings him the money—he’s boss of a prominent store; some say that he wouldn’t be sunny, if he found that it paid him no more. He smiles at the maiden, the charmer, who to his emporium sails; he smiles at the honest old farmer, who comes to trade butter for nails; he smiles on the kid with a penny who asks for a section of gum; he’d smile on the bogies, if any should to his establishment come. When done is the day, with its labors, he home to his mansion repairs; and I am informed by his neighbors, who watch him from peepholes of theirs, that he is a reg’lar gorilla, who snarls at his children and wife; some day, with a bludgeon of willow, they’ll knock all the smiles from his life. This smiling, that’s boosted so often, is surely an excellent graft; alas for the heart that won’t soften, for the fellow who never has laughed! It’s good to be cheery and winning, with laughter as light as the foam, and fine to do some of your grinning with children and mother, at home.

Business Prose - Poems

Various Merchants.

ONE day a man with a downcast face blew into the village grocer's place. "I've dealt with you many moons," he said; "I've bought your codfish and prunes and bread, and I always paid when I said I would, and you doubtless know that my credit's good. Now I'm out of work and without a dime, and I'd like to buy a few things on time." And the grocer sold him a lot of truck, and hoped he soon would have better luck. He told his tale to the butcher, then, at the drygoods store, to the clothing men; they all remembered that he had paid, and they were pleased when they got his trade; and now that luck for a time had changed, he found no one of these men estranged. They sold him things in their stately stores, and wished him luck when he left their doors. And then the man of the luckless star dropped in at last at the booze bazaar. He told his tale; he was all, all in, but wanted credit for beer and gin. His coat was fanned by the barkeep's feet, and he bounced two yards when he hit the street.

Business Prose - Poems

The Schoolmaster.

MY teacher used to call me "Bub," and when he called he'd take a club, and roll his sleeves up to his chin, and scare me with his fishy grin; he'd show me where I'd have to stand, and tell me to extend my hand. "My son, it grieves me to the quick, that I must lam you with a stick," that tire-some teacher used to say, still grinning in his fiendish way. "The walloping may make you sore; alas, it hurts your teacher more! Don't think, my lad, that when I whale your short ribs with this cedar rail, that I am glad to make you smart; it grieves and wounds me to the heart. Now, stand up here, you little dunce—" He soaked me forty ways at once; he cracked me twice across the toes, and landed then upon my nose, and dotted me upon the chin as though he'd like to drive it in. And as he swung his trusty pole he gasped the same old rigmarole: "It—does not—cause—your teacher—bliss—that he—must—slug— your—slats like—this!" I soon forgot the rain of blows, the swats he gave me on the nose; but o'er his dreary platitudes my spirit broods, and broods, and broods. And all my life I've found it thus; a fellow will not make much fuss if Fortune uses him like sin—if she omits to rub it in!

Business Prose - Poems

The Burden of Wealth.

THERE was a man who had a roll so big 'twould plug a stovepipe hole. He longed to mingle with the crowd and show he wasn't vain or proud; to gain the confidence of those who labor hard and wear old clothes; to prove he was a mighty man, built on a broad, heroic plan. But all his efforts failed, and he was plunged in dark blue misery. The fact that he was beastly rich dumped all his longings in the ditch. The people wouldn't overlook the figures in his banking book; they couldn't estimate his soul, or separate it from his roll. He gave his native town a park; "his conscience hurts him in the dark," the people said, and grimly smiled; "remorse will surely drive him wild." He gave a picnic to the poor, who bleak and squalid lives endure; the people said: "For vain display he throws his shining scads away; he listens to the paupers' sighs, and flaunts his bullion in their eyes." No matter what his plan or dream, the people saw a scurvy scheme behind it, and abused him sore, and threw it into him some more. And so he said, with aching heart: "The rich man lives a life apart; he can't get next the common squad while he is saddled with his wad; folks won't believe he has a soul, because they know he has a roll."

Business Prose - Poems

The Reliable Man.

OLD Tolliver the tailor is making lots of scads; he has the trade of business men, and all the wealthy lads. While others are complaining that things are mighty slack, he's busy as a bumble-wasp, and adding to his stack. I order sundry garments, and ask when they'll be done; he studies for a moment, as solemnly as one who has no sort of liking for idle, empty talk: "Your rags will sure be ready at half past ten o'clock." He gives me this assurance and gravely turns away, to tinker with his tapeline around some other jay. All sorts of things may happen before the hour he set; perchance there'll be a deluge of water beastly wet; a fire may sweep the village, a cyclone snort around, perhaps a howling earthquake will harrow up the ground. There may be labor riots, there may be battle's shock—but my rags will be ready at half past ten o'clock. Old Tolliver the tailor is prosperous and wise; he never makes excuses, he never deals in lies. He's careful with his promise, but when the same is made, it's good as royal warrant—and so he gets the trade.

Business Prose - Poems

Get Busy.

THE world rolls on, from day to day,
and idle men are in the way; the
loafing graft will never pay; get
busy, then, get busy! The man who
loiters in the shade to watch the busy
men's parade will find his hopes of for-
tune fade; get busy, then, get busy! If
you in feeble style depend upon assist-
ance from a friend you're sure to fail be-
fore the end—get busy, then, get busy!
Make up your mind that you will pack
your burden on your own broad back, and,
grave and buoyant, hit the track—get busy,
then, get busy! Just feel that you're of
equal worth with any dog-gone man on
earth, regardless of his age or birth; get
busy, then, get busy! And, having made
your mind up quite, show by your acts
that you are right! Cut grass, cut grass,
by day and night! Get busy, O get busy!

Business Prose - Poems

The Two Merchants.

ONE merchant said to his toiling clerk: "I'm greatly pleased with the way you work. The chap who tends to his duties right is bound to win the worldly fight, and you're bound to get to the top some day; meanwhile I guess I'll advance your pay." O glad was the heart of the clerklet then, and he buckled down to his work again, and he made things hum in the blamed old store, as things had never been hummed before. In t'other storeroom, across the street, the clerks were working with frozen feet; the merchant carried a scowl all day, and groaned as he gave them their meagre pay; he never praised them when hard they wrought, but kicked and scolded, and made them hot; and so they soldiered and fooled away the passing hours of each golden day. There's something wrong if you lay the blame on the men who help you to play the game, when things go crooked and trade is hum; your men would help you to make things hum, if they'd been treated in proper shape—been given posies instead of crape.

Business Prose - Poems

Knowing Your Trade.

ONE day I had to take a board and fix the roof, which let in rain; I sawed my fingers off and roared until the neighbors had a pain. I tried, and tried, to drive a nail, and every time the hammer missed; I toiled for hours without avail; I broke my neck and sprained my wrist; I clawed the shingles off the roof, and piled up smoking words in tiers, till friends and neighbors stood aloof, and held their fingers to their ears. And then a carpenter I sought; of sawing boards a trade he makes; he fussed around my lowly cot, and had it fixed in forty shakes. He knew just how to wield a saw, he knew just how to drive a nail; he wore a smile, and from his jaw there came no language rank and stale. And when his little task was done, he came inside my humble home, and said, when he had got his mon: "I wish you'd read this little pome. I dashed it off the other night, when inspiration warmed my heart; I would that I might always write, for I'm a honey-bird on Art." I read two lines; then, with a roar, I tied him in a sailor's knot, and buried him beneath the floor of my obscure but happy cot.

Business Prose - Poems

The Dark Days.

SOME days are dark and punk and pruney, and all the world seems going loony, and luck is off its base; and every little job you tackle just starts off wrong, and makes you cackle till cusswords fill the place. All day your evil fortune lingers; you stub your toes and mash your fingers, run slivers in your brow; and when you end your futile labors you are so mad you whip your neighbors, and poison some one's cow. I've had such days, and I discovered that evil fortune o'er me hovered, as long as I stayed mad; but always it got up and dusted, it's little lark blue graft was busted, when I looked bright and glad. When Old Bad Luck comes snooping round me, and tries to pester and confound me, I give my face a jerk, and spring a smile of seven acres, and call Bad Luck the worst of fakers, and buckle down to work. Bad Luck will linger if you curse it, or take it in your arms and nurse it, and soak it with your tears; but if it sees you laugh 'twill travel, and just keep on a scratching gravel, for forty-seven years!

Business Prose - Poems

The Salesman.

TODAY I went to Jimpson's store to buy a sugar-coated pill. This Mr. Jimpson is a bore, whose tongue out-clacks a coffee mill. All sorts of language then he tossed and bandied in his dismal haunt, for he was bound at any cost to sell me things I didn't want. "I've just received a splendid line of setting hens and spaniel pups, and safety spoons and binding twine, and boneless prunes and china cups." "I am," I said, "in frenzied haste, so don't detain me, I implore." But Jimpson grabbed me round the waist, and dragged me round his dingy store, and showed me divers kinds of junk, and filled me with his prices full, and everything I saw was punk, and I was madder than a bull. I bought an old stuffed crocodile, for which I paid an iron yen, the which he added to his pile, and smiled and said: "Pray, come again!" I'll go again when pigs have horns, and not before, you bet your hat; my stately form no more adorns a blamed old robber's roost like that. I've always thought that merchants make an error when their goods they flaunt, insisting that their patrons take a lot of stuff they do not want.

Business Prose - Poems

Shining Promises.

DON'T tell me now, my Willie boy, of dazzling things you mean to do; for threats of that sort but annoy a sage whose years are not a few. I've noticed, in the passing years that those who seek the higher ways get down and work like brindle steers, and leave the talking graft for jays. I do not care a red for schemes, unless you work and watch and weep; I do not give a whoop for dreams, unless you have them in your sleep. You Willie boys make golden plans, and all your plans to you seem good; but I will bet my pile on Hans who gets his saw and cuts the wood. You Willie boys are throwing fits o'er fortunes that will come to pass; but I admire the curves of Fritz, whose safety scythe is cutting grass. You Willie boys are scheming how to keep your fingers white and nice; but I have marked the sweat-stained brow of Hiram, who puts up the ice. Oh, Willie, if you'd really nail some honey in this busy hive, quit dreaming—get to work like Hail Columbia, and you'll arrive!

Business Prose - Poems

The Sturdy Yeoman.

IF I could sing as Austin sings, and strike his master lyre, I would not give to queens and kings my words of living fire. For folks who loaf around on thrones don't need the poet's lay; they weary of his throbbing tones, and wish he'd go away. I'd sing about the man who rules his kingdom with a plow; who daily whacks his dusty mules, and milks the spotted cow. I'd sing about the sturdy plebe, who most appeals to me, who bravely breaks the stubborn glebe, whatever glebe may be. The farmer raises wheat and corn, with plow and thingumbob; this world would be a place forlorn if he should jump his job. The men that we consider great, the rich, the men of fame, the mighty pillars of the state—all these might quit the game, and this old earth would jog along, and never throw a fit; but things would soon be going wrong if all the farmers quit. And so I'd sing the yeoman's lay, if I had Austin's harp, immortalize the bale of hay, and boost the farming sharp; I'd pass up all the thrones and crowns, and all the princely trade, for men who come in hand-me-downs with eggs their hens have laid.

Business Prose - Poems

The Just-as-Goods.

THEY are swarming in the cities and the woods; you will find them in all earthly neighborhoods; swiping thunder from their neighbors, profiting by others' labors—you have met them in your walks, the Just-as-goods! Some inventor with a peck or two of brains, may produce a something new in aeroplanes; then the Just-as-goods will shark it, rush an airship on the market, and the good man gets his labor for his pains. You may write a little book that hits the spot, something clever, with a brand new line of thought; and the Just-as-goods will grab it, and they'll imitate its habit, and they'll clutter up the bookstores with their rot. You may make a little painting or cartoon; or invent a better way to cook a prune; and the Just-as-goods will travel on your trail, a-scratching gravel, and they'll fill your soul with sorrow pretty soon. E'en a poet who is old and tired and fat finds the Just-as-goods forever standing pat; and they imitate his verses, and he might indulge in curses, but there really wouldn't be much good in that.

Business Prose - Poems

Excelsior.

THE grocer said: "I have some good and satisfying breakfast food." I viewed with scorn and said: "Tut, tut! Your breakfast food is nothing but—excelsior! Men had more sense when I was young," I said, when I had oiled my tongue; "they lived on bread and wholesome meat, and never asked themselves to eat excelsior. Their grists they carried to the mill and had them ground and paid the bill; and they were men of brawn and pith; they never filled their stomachs with excelsior. Then men got value for their scads; they reared up healthy girls and lads; but now we feed them, day by day, on shredded thistles, toasted hay, excelsior. We toddle to the mill no more; we buy kids fodder at the store—the stuff put up by health food cranks: they carry in their little tanks excelsior. We're guilty of these measly crimes, and then we talk of stringent times, and at the country farm we die because, like chumps, we always buy excelsior. For good old meal I'll pay my rocks; I want no sawdust in a box; to old time ways I stick like glue, and you won't see your uncle chew excelsior."

Business Prose - Poems

The Untidy Store.

THE grocer chased me up and down, in sunshine and in shade; he knew I always paid my bills, and yearned to get my trade. He hounded me and pestered me by every human means, until at last I sought his store to buy some boneless beans. He had some mouldy looking clerks, who loafed around the store, and combed their whiskers with their hands and watched the clock and swore. The floor was littered up with jugs and boxes, crates and kegs, containing uninviting fruit, and prehistoric eggs. The floor itself had not been swept since Noah bossed the ark; the windows of the dreary joint with grime and dirt were dark. I took the grocer by the hand and led him to the street, and said: "Some friend should push you down and pat you with his feet. A man who runs a grimy store that's full of grimy clerks some day will see the sheriff come to close the whole blamed works. Go, turn the hose on all those clerks, and clean your dismal joint, and when you ask me for my trade I will not say 'Aroint!'"

Business Prose - Poems

Signatures

SOME unknown friend sat down and wrote to me a kind and pleasant note. His sentiments were mighty sweet; his penmanship was plain and neat until he tried to write his name, and then a fit attacked his frame. He must have suffered fearful pain to make a drawling so insane. Methinks I see him paw the air, and bite the rungs out of his chair. I only hope that some kind soul was there to push him, with a pole, into the ice-chest, there to lie until the fierce attack passed by. How sad it is so many men climb up and ride upon a pen, and splatter ink, and bust their hames, when they attempt to sign their names! The note to which I have referred—could anything be more absurd? I've studied it with tears and groans; sometimes I think the name is Jones, and then again I'd say it's Brown, with sundry letters upside down. Perhaps it's Smith; it may be Duff; I give it up—I've toiled enough. There ought to be some chloride cures for men with dizzy signatures; they make the angry passions rise, they bring hot water to the eyes, they waste the time of busy men, by their gymnastics with the pen.

Business Prose - Poems

The Honest Grocer.

I VISITED the grocer's store and met the owner at the door, and said: "Say, Mr. Wheeze, I wish you'd tell me, straight and true, without evasion, whether you have got some first class cheese?" With great distress the grocer shrunk, and cried: "The cheese we have is punk, it fairly makes me cry; it's bilious in its tint, and coarse; I wouldn't feed it to a horse; go somewhere else and buy. Of course," the grocer said, "I must confess I'd like to get your dust, and hold your trade, forsooth; but when you ask me if my cheese is first rate goods and bound to please, I have to tell the truth." I clasped that grocer to my breast, and nearly squashed him on my vest, and wiped away his tears. "You'll have my trade," I gaily cried, "and that of all my friends beside, for forty thousand years." And then I went into his store, and bought a ton of flour or more, and mackerel in kegs, and canned tobacco, beans and peas, and axle grease and whiffletrees, and codfish, prunes and eggs. It took the largest village dray to haul my purchases away, and every time I pass I drop into that grocer's store and clasp him to my breast some more, and buy some garden sass.

Business Prose - Poems

The Preacher's Snap.

AND now I'll write my sermon," the preacher said, perplex'd, "if I can but determine upon a fruitful text." He took his pen and started his labors to pursue; a woman broken-hearted came in and wept a few; and when he had consoled her, and shooed her from his den, encouraged her and told her to call around again, this news to him was carried—a pair of country folk were waiting to be married; of course the groom was broke. And having duly spliced 'em, and blessed them from his door, he shook his brains and iced 'em, and tried to write some more. The telephone is ringing, a summons sharp and clear; his paper from him flinging, he bends attentive ear. The voice of some one crying comes sobbing o'er the wire: "Old Quackenush is dying—come quick' ere he'll expire!" And when that errand's ended, and to his little den, his weary way he's wended, and seized his trusty pen, a large donation party comes smiling to his shack, with greetings loud and hearty, and pattings on the back. They give him carpet slippers and hand-made woolen caps, and galvanized tin dippers, and other useless traps. And when at last he preaches, the leader of the choir in strident whisper screeches: "Our minister lacks fire!"

Business Prose - Poems

Thomas Edison

YOU talk about your great big men! This man, who tinkers in his den, and tackles problems weird and queer, and springs a triumph once a year, is such a mighty figure that the highest terms of praise seem flat. If I should toil for fifty years in sweat and agony and tears, and if some kind, well-meaning friend should come and tell me at the end that I had baled as much of hay as Thomas bales in half a day, that speech would surely make me yell with happiness too great to tell. The great inventors who are dead—each had one notion in his head; and when he put that notion through, there was no more for him to do. He just sat round and drew his pay, and shriveled up and blew away. One big achievement was the stuff; one great idea was enough. But Edison, that wizard weird, don't sit around and raise a beard, or gossip at the corner store about the days that are no more. No sooner does he lift our hair with some invention strange and rare, than to his noisy, smoky shops, with tools in hand he gaily hops, and fashions with his sledge and rasp something that makes the whole world gasp. Though small and thin he weighs a ton; he's twenty great men rolled in one.

Business Prose - Poems

Forget It.

IF you detest this vale of tears, forget it! If you've a whine for victims' ears, forget it; the folks who toddle to and fro and do their duties as they go don't care about your tale of woe—forget it. You think your mission is to teach? Forget it. You'd like a chance to make a speech? Forget it. Too many men like you have sinned by giving us less work than wind; if you to noise your faith have pinned, forget it. You say the laws are all unjust? Forget it. They grind the poor man's face to dust? Forget it. The poor man who neglects his jaw to do a stunt with axe or saw will have no trouble with the law—forget it. You say your neighbors are unkind? Forget it. They persecute and rob you blind? Forget it. For folks are pretty much the same; the man who roars is most to blame; they'll treat you as you play the game; forget it. You have some gossip to relate? Forget it. A scandal never pays the freight—forget it. A hundred bosoms have been wrung by evil stories you have sprung; if you've another on your tongue, forget it.

Business Prose - Poems

The Unemployed

JAMES JIMSON worked in Quimper's store. He doesn't work there any more. He was a calculating clerk who thought he knew just how much work a man should do to earn his pay—he drew about two bones a day. He was insistent on his rights; he doubtless sat up late at nights, the constitution to peruse, and o'er his grievous wrongs to muse. He knew his duties to a hair; he would not even dust a chair, or stoke the stove, or close a door—he wasn't paid to do that chore. His nature had grown harsh and sour through fear that he might work an hour for which he would not draw his pay; he brooded o'er his rights all day, and dreamed about his rights in bed, until his rights went to his head. Then Quimper exercised his right, and fired young James one balmy night. He said: "I gave you every chance to flourish, prosper and advance, but all your brains have turned to whey, and all your heart has turned to hay. A thousand men will gaily jerk their jackets off and do your work, and bless me that they have the chance—so please skedaddle, Mr. Pance." I pity him who snorts and fights and rips around about his rights!

Business Prose - Poems

My Wheelbarrow.

MY trusty wheelbarrow is long and it's narrow; it's painted a beautiful delicate green; it's strong and it's handy; it's simply a dandy—a better wheelbarrow I never have seen. With joy that's abiding I take my wife riding; she climbs in the barrow, I wheel her around; and motorists gey me while joy-riding by me, but little I care for their laughter and sound. My good old wheelbarrow goes straight as an arrow, I push it before me with jubilant feet; whatever 'twas made for, it's mine—and it's paid for, and so I don't envy the autos I meet. I'd rather go wheeling my barrow and feeling my raiment grow moist with a rich, honest sweat, than ride in a carriage like groom to his marriage, and have the sad knowledge that I was in debt. Of all the world's curses there's nothing that worse is than going in debt for the things we don't need; so, blithe as a sparrow I push my wheelbarrow—keep tab on my motions, get onto my speed!

Business Prose - Poems

Early Birds

THE early bird, so the sage affirms,
is always catching the choicest
worms; and this is proof, says that
wise old grouch, that man should
hasten to leave his couch. But the richest
sleep that a man can have, the kind that
acts as a balm and salve, is the sleep that
comes when he ought to rise if he'd be
"healthy, wealthy and wise." When a
man gets up ere his sleep is done, and
starts a-scratching around for mon, he may
be filling his coffers deep, but, jumping
ginger! he loses sleep! A yard of slumber
is worth more kale than anything in this
gloomy vale. Let others rustle, their vig-
ils keep, while I'm enjoying my morning
sleep. Let others capture the festive
plunk; I'll snore a few in my downy
bunk. And when I rise, after sleeping
much, I feel like working, to beat the
Dutch; my head is clear and my mind se-
rene, I am not grouchy, or cross or mean.
I shall not be by the sages bossed; their
heads are addled, their wires are crossed,
and I do not suffer for early worms, or
boa constrictors or toads or germs.

Business Prose - Poems

An Epitaph.

BENEATH this stone there lies at rest a man who always did his best. The gods ordained that he should move along a lowly, humble groove. For him there was no wealth or fame, he bore no proud ancestral name, no palace doors for him swung wide, but in his hut he lived and died. His years were many and his toil brought riches from the stubborn soil, but all that wealth to them was brought who owned the land whereon he wrought. He fashioned lumber and the boards made shelter for the languid lords. He fed the cows and herded swine that other men might nobly dine. From break of dawn till close of day he toiled along his weary way, and took his earnings in his hand to fatten those who owned the land. His feet were seamed with bramble scars, that others might have motor cars. This strip of ground is his reward; 'twas given by his overlord; it's six feet long and two feet wide, and here they brought him when he died. To labor hard for fifty years, endure the burdens and the tears, to have no grateful hours of rest, to toil, and bend, and do your best, to grind, and moil and delve and save, and at the last to get—a grave! Poor souls that in the darkness grope, and weave and spin and have no hope!

Business Prose - Poems

Business and Sentiment

IF I could write one noble song, I heard the poet cry, an anthem clear and bold and strong, too grandly pure to die, I would not care for worldly state—but that's a futile hope; I have to write a hundredweight of rhymes on Jimson's soap. Could I, the sad musician said, produce one living strain, to haunt the world when I am dead, my soul would know no pain; to have men say the harp was struck by one great master hand! But I must play—it's just my luck—the bass drum in the band. And thus it is and always was since Time took up its path; poor foolish man rears up and paws the air in idle wrath. We think it vain for higher things to work, and plan, and try; unless we have some hand-made wings we know we cannot fly; and that is why we seldom soar much higher than the grass; we write cheap odes or make a roar on instruments of brass.

Business Prose - Poems

The Usal Luck

I SHOT an arrow into the air, and then I gave it no further care, but split some kindling and fed the hogs, and threw some bricks at the neighbors' dogs, and did my chores with a joyous mind, and woe and trouble seemed far behind. That night a peeler came to my bed, and broke his billy upon my head, and bore me off to a mouldy cell, and there I sit on a stool and yell. And there it's likely that I'll remain; my arrow ruined an aeroplane. It flew right into an airship's works, and made the rudder give mighty jerks, and knocked some cogs from the jinglegig, and tore a hole in thingumyjig. The man who rode on that ship in style was knocked from his perch, and fell a mile, and when he landed, alack! alas! he broke an acre of greenhouse glass. I'm charged with arson and larceny, and homicide in the steenth degree, and breach of promise and other crimes, and lawyers badger me for my dimes. I shot an arrow one evil day, I let it fly in my aleck way; there was wood to saw, there were chores begun, there were useful tasks that I should have done, but I fooled around like a useless clam; I shot my arrow, and here I am!

Business Prose - Poems

Salting Them Down.

PUT seven dollars (\$7) in the bank as soon as you can do it; prepare for seasons lean and lank, and you will never rue it. I used to blow my wages in as fast as I could earn them; whene'er I had some scads of tin, I made a rush to burn them. I bought all kinds of raiment gay, and shining ties and collars; and then one happy, fateful day, I pickled seven dollars (\$7). I put those roubles down in brine—an impulse led me to it. And now just take this hunch of mine: Go thou likewise and do it. Those seven bones soon called for more, and eftsoons I had twenty; each week I put in three or four and soon I'll roll in plenty. Since I began this banking graft my self respect increases; I feel that I'm as big as Taft, and just as slick as grease is. I am the young man unafraid, the youth with glad kyoodle; the whole town wants to get my trade, because I have the boodle. I do not fear the rainy day whereon the broke man hollers; so take my plan—go right away and salt down seven dollars (\$7).

Business Prose - Poems

The Law-Books

THE laws are numerous as flies upon a summer day; at making laws the statesmen wise still pound and pound away. No man on earth could recollect a list of all the laws; I tried it once—my mind is wrecked, and now you know the cause. Some gents who are in prison yet proclaim with angry shout that they are so with laws beset, they really can't stay out. "A man can't walk around a block," I heard a sad man wail, "but what the cops will round him flock, and chuck him into jail." I heard the butcher man repine, and weep, and rail at fate, because he had to pay a fine for being short on weight. I heard the corner grocer snort, and use some language sour, because they yanked him into court for selling moldy flour. The milkman bottled half the creek, and sold it on his route; he said: "The law just makes me sick," when friends had bailed him out. The laws are numerous as scales upon a fish, no doubt; and so some people are in jails, and simply can't stay out; but all the time and everywhere one great truth stands out clear: The man who acts upon the square, has nothing much to fear.

Business Prose - Poems

The Human Head

THE greatest gift the gods bestowed on mortal was his dome of thought; it sometimes seems a useless load, when one is tired, and worn and hot; it sometimes seems a trifling thing, less useful than one's lungs or slats; a mere excuse, it seems, to bring us duns from men who deal in hats. Some men appreciate their heads, and use them wisely every day, and every passing minute sheds new splendor on their upward way; while some regard their heads as junk, mere idle knobs upon their necks; such men are nearly always sunk in failure, and are gloomy wrecks. I know a clerk who's served his time in one old store for twenty years; he's marked his fellows climb, and climb—and marked with jealousy and tears; he's labored there since he was young; he'll labor there till he is dead; he never rose a single rung, because he never used his head. I know a poorhouse in the vale, where fifty-seven paupers stay; they paw the air and weep and wail, and cuss each other all the day; and there they'll loll while life endures, and there they'll die in pauper beds; their chances were as good as yours—but then they never used their heads. O human head! Majestic box! O wondrous can, from labels free! If man is craving fame or rocks, he'll get them if he uses thee!

Business Prose - Poems

The Real Terror

IF you should chance to mention Death, most men will have a grouch; and yet to die is nothing more than going to your couch, when you have done your little stunt, performed the evening chores, wound up the clock, blown out the light, and put the cat outdoors. The good old world jogged smoothly on before you had your fling; and it will jog as smoothly on when you have cashed your string. King Death himself is good and kind; he always does his best to sooth the heart that's sorrowful, and give the weary rest; but there are evils in his train that daunt the stoutest soul, and one of them may serve to end this cheerful rigmarole. I always have a haunting dread that when I come to die, the papers of the town will tell how some insurance guy, paid up the money that was due to weeping kin of mine, before the funeral procesh had fallen out of line; and thus they'll use me for an ad, some Old Line Life to boom, before I've had a chance to get acquainted with my tomb!

Business Prose - Poems

The Era of Progress

THEY send information by wireless to land from ships far away; in cooking machines that are fireless our dinners are baked every day. The factory chimneys are smokless, where up-to-date methods prevail; the humorous papers are jokeless, and merchants succeed when they fail. We travel in carriages horseless, propelled without water or fire, and run over people remorseless—unless they should puncture a tire. Our homes will be woodless and brickless, when Edison pours his cement; but the Constant Subscriber who's kickless, won't write to the press, worth a cent!

Business Prose - Poems

Pegging Away

THERE'S room at the top for the fellow who's bound to land on the summit some day; the trail's pretty rough, and there's holes in the ground, and there's danger of going astray; but the top will be reached by the strong, patient soul, who ever is keeping his eyes on the goal, and always keeps pegging away. There's trouble to burn in this valley of grief, and the skies are oft sullen and gray, but a man never finds that it brings him relief to murmur and grumble and bray; he'll find that it lightens his burden of gloom, and chases his grievances clear up the flume, if he only keeps pegging away. It's tough to be poor when the insolent rich go past in their carriages gay, to jump from the highway and into the ditch, avoiding the wheels of their shay; but you in your auto or carriage may ride, and stir up the dust of a whole countryside, if you always keep pegging away. The men who are busy miss half of the woe that's hunting for victims to slay; they get all the cream in this valley below, while idlers subsist on the whey; while Fortune kicks others she'll give you a kiss, you'll win more applause, and you'll know more of bliss, if you always keep pegging away.

Business Prose - Poems

The Coin Chaser

THE rustler has a hundred schemes for raking in the rocks, and when he goes to bed he dreams of deeds, and bonds, and stocks; though young, he's bent and worn and gray, from heaping up his pile; and so I round him up and say: "Oh, is the game worth while? You never let a coin get past, or miss a dividend; one-tenth of what you have amassed is more than you can spend; you've made yourself a mere machine, that works as with a crank; and life to you can only mean a balance at the bank. The man who labors on the road, and earns two bones a day, who goes at eve to his abode, and smokes his pipe of clay, and reads a dry-goods catalogue, for want of something new, or gambols with the kid and dog, has far more fun than you. There's nothing in a lot of stocks to bring you happiness; and when you're nailed down in a box, they'll bring you even less."

Business Prose - Poems

Lady Nicotine

SMOKING is a filthy habit, and a big, fat, black cigar advertises that you're straying from the Higher Life afar. I have walked in summer meadows where the sunbeams flashed and broke, and I never saw the horses or the sheep or cattle smoke; I have watched the birds, with wonder, when the world with dew was wet, and I never saw a robin puffing at a cigarette; I have fished in many rivers when the sucker crop was ripe, and I never saw a catfish pulling at a briar pipe. Man's the only living creature that parades this vale of tears, like a blooming traction engine, blowing smoke from mouth and ears. If Dame Nature had intended, when she first invented man, that he'd smoke, she would have built him on a widely diff'rent plan; she'd have fixed him with a damper and a stovepipe and a grate; he'd have had a smoke consumer that was strictly up-to-date. Therefore, let the erring mortal put his noisome pipe in soak—he can always get a new one if he feels he needs a smoke.

Business Prose - Poems

The Auctioneer's Cry.

I STOOD and watched the auctioneer, who bought things cheap and sold them dear. He had a large, abysmal mouth, the which he pointed to the south, and from its dark recesses poured a flood of eloquence that soared. He'd dam the torrent now and then, and look upon the throng of men, and slam his fist the desk upon, and thunder: "Going—going—gone!" What is there in that chaste refrain that makes it linger in my brain? I see the village sport go by, with dark blue breath and bloodshot eye, to try and ease his load of care by taking some of Fido's hair; I see him put his watch in pawn, and murmur: "Going—going—gone!" Here's Emma Jane on Cholly's arm; she doesn't mean a bit of harm, but she's acquired a notion wrong that life is but a dance and song. The peeler says her joyous feet are wearing furrows in the street. "I'll pinch her," says he, "some fine dawn." Another going—going—gone! So many hit the downward pike! The kind of folks that all men like; the bright, the thoughtless and the gay, all hiking down, the same old way! We'll lecture them, and hand them tracts, and load them down with helpful facts, when they are safely jailed at last, but who will warn, as they go past, perdition's glaring road upon, these mortals going—going—gone?

Business Prose - Poems

Brass Tacks.

IT'S seldom that I chase down to the wailing place. I see so many go to that resort of woe, fresh curses to invent, to roast the government, to boost the grouch's cause, to clamor for new laws, to have the old repealed, that all men may be heeled. And I am baling hay, the good old fashioned way. I do my daily grind with calm, contented mind; I'm uttering no roars; I have no corns or sores; the world seems pretty gay, while I am baling hay. These men who rant and fret o'er perils they have met, who prance and chew the rag about the country's flag and how it flaunts and waves above a gang of knaves—what fun do they extract from this, their daily act? What good do they pursue with all their whoopsydo? What comforts have they bought with all their tommyrot? What bogies have they slain with all their toil and pain? I earn my livelihood by sawing piles of wood; I saw the whole year long, and I see nothing wrong. I always get my pay when ended is the day, and to my home repair, and find no wailing there.

Business Prose - Poems

The Time Killer

O TIME hung heavy on my hands,
for I had naught to do; the
hourglass dripped its sluggish
sands as slow as flowing glue.
And so I said: "This sad life wends like
leaden-footed whales; and so I'll call upon
my friends, and tell them merry tales. It
may relieve this heart of mine, and pass
an hour away, and make the sun of glad-
ness shine on lives too dark and gray."
I called upon a busy man and told an anecdote; he left his chair and blithely ran, and seized me by the coat, and pushed me gaily through the hall, and kicked me down the stairs, and made remarks concerning gall, and pelted me with chairs. I sat upon the pavement then, and mused in somber strain: "Though I would help my fellow-men, my work seems all in vain. I try to cheer the gloomy town, and work the sunshine graft, yet people simply drop me down the elevator shaft. There surely must be something wrong with optimistic stunts, for when I sing my sunshine song the hearer simply hunts for clubs and bricks and things like those wherewith to pound my head, and break my back and spoil my clothes, and leave me two-thirds dead." The cop who helped me to arise remarked: "You're slugged again? Take my advice, my friend; be wise—don't bother busy men!"

Business Prose - Poems

The Idle Hen.

I HAVE a large Buff Cochin hen. I keep her in a gaudy pen, and there she fusses all the day, and never takes the time to lay. In summer time, when eggs were cheap, that hen would lay eggs in her sleep; she laid enough to feed a troop; she piled them up all round the coop. I used to take those eggs of hers and threw them at the passing curs; for all the world was daubed with eggs; they fetched three cents per dozen kegs. But now that winter raves and groans, and eggs are scarce as precious stones, that silly hen just loafes all day, and doesn't earn her corn and hay. Some day, when wearied by the strife that marks this journey we call life, when with a deep conviction fraught that chicken pie would hit the spot, I'll kill that old hen, I'm afraid, and then she'll wish that she had laid. There's nothing worse, you'll all agree, than mis-directed energy. The hen that lays when eggs are cheap, and when they're dear lies down to sleep; the dog that barks when nothing's wrong, and sleeps when burglars come along; the man who tills on Sabbath day, and loafes the whole long week away—these from one's eyes the tears would draw; there surely ought to be a law.

Business Prose - Poems

Admirable Crichton

THEY tell about a wondrous man who died ere you were born; and I believe the tales I've heard about him—in a horn. They say this gentleman excelled in everything he tried; and he could write a lovely ode, or pierce a swordsman's hide; or plan a war or kiss a cook, or sing a serenade; he was the glory of his sex; when can his glory fade? With all his skill I've never heard of anything he's done that helped to brighten up the world or cheer a weary one. The Crichtons do not cut much grass outside the poet's page; the world is wanting specialists in this prosaic age. Don't try to learn a gross of things, to make admirers yell; to learn one thing is quite enough—but learn that one thing well. I'd rather build a wall of mud and do the job up brown, than have a hand in every trade that's humming in the town. For men who favor walls of mud, would see how well I wrought, and when they're wanting walls themselves, they'd hire me on the spot. No odds how humble be your task, if you make up your mind to do it better than 'twas done in all the years behind, the world will hear about your skill, will know that you excel; so learn to do one kind of thing, and learn to do it well.

Business |P r o s e - P o e m s

The Man Who Waits.

ALL things will come to him who waits, the wise man said, and went to bed, but history, methinks, relates that they don't get there till you're dead. It is a creed for lazy men, for idlers in the market place; the man who tries and tries again—that chap the good things always chase. I used to throw my hours away, I loafed through many sunny Junes, while other men were making hay, and nothing came to me but prunes. “Good things will come some joyous morn,” I said, “if I stay on the job.” And other men were eating corn while I was chewing on the cob. And after many years I said: “That logic’s surely out of plumb; I’ve waited till my nose is red, and still the good things do not come.” Then I rolled up my gingham sleeves, and cracked my heels and gave a yell, and started bringing in my sheaves, since which I’ve done surpassing well. I own a cow, a pair of pigs, a phonograph without a crank, and divers other thing-my-jigs, and have six dollars in the bank.

Business Prose - Poems

Sir Walter Raleigh

SIR WALTER RALEIGH sat in jail, removed from strife and flurry; the light was dim, his bread was stale, and yet he didn't worry. He knew the headsman, grim and dour, with sleeves uprolled and frock off, might come to him at any hour, and cut his blooming block off. He knew that he would evermore with dismal chains be laden, till he had traveled through the door that opens into Aiddenn. To have his name wiped off the map King James was in a hurry; and yet—he was a dauntless chap!—he still refused to worry. Serenely he pursued his work, and wrote his lustrous pages, serenely as a smiling clerk who writes for weekly wages. And when the headsman came and said: "I hate the job, Sir Walter, but I must ask you for your head," the great man did not falter. "Gadzooks," quoth he, "and eke odsfish! Thou art a courteous shaver! Take off my head! I only wish I might return the favor!" And so the headsman swung the axe, beneath the sky of Surrey; Sir Walter died beneath his whacks, but still refused to worry!

Business Prose - Poems

Willie and Johnnie.

WHEN the boss suggests to Willie that he do this chore or that, Willie goes a-hustling to it, quicker than a circus cat, and he acts as though he liked it; when one little job is through, he comes loping back inquiring if there's nothing else to do. And the boss, whose heart is weary of incompetents and drones, says: "He's earning better wages—I must see he gets more bones." When the boss remarks to Johnnie, "Go and sweep the ceiling now," Johnnie goes about the business with a dark and gloomy brow; in a weary, listless fashion he performs his little chore, always looking, always squinting at the clock above the door. And the boss, whose heart is harrowed, sizes up that languid boy, and remarks: "That blooming youngster isn't worth three whoops in Troy." Oh, the mantle of Elijah falls upon me now and then, and I gaze into the future, see the boys grow into men; and I mark the rise of Willie to the shining heights of fame, and I'm onto little Johnnie losing out at every game.

Business Prose - Poems

A Bale of Hay

SOME bards their harpstrings deftly strike, and sing of roses and the like; of coral isles and starlit seas and birds whose plumage gilds the breeze, but when I sing at close of day, my song is of a bale of hay. O wondrous bale, that takes me back across the years on dreamy track to sunny fields where strong men wrought—the fields that idlers never sought. With wringing raiment on their backs they shaped their windrows and their stacks; I see and hear it all again, the cheery voices of the men, the thirsty with uptilted jugs, the horses straining in their tugs, the mower's clanking, raucous roar, the glad march home when day was o'er. And when the hay was cured and bright, and aptly named the mule's delight, they fed it to the press and made the bale for which my harp is played. Each handful of this fragrant hay suggests a long, long summer day of honest, wise productive toil, of wrestling with the parent soil. No dreamers made this bulky bale; no trifling men or poets pale; no loafers placed the wire around, no lily fingers raked the ground, but men of might were there that day, and wrought to build that bale of hay. And so with lilting roundelay do I embalm the bale of hay.

Business Prose - Poems

Dreams and Grub

I WANDERED o'er the sunlit lea, and gathered roses as I went, and all the wild birds sang to me, and filled me with a sweet content; my neighbor, of a grosser mould, toiled in the field the whole day long, lured ever on by lust for gold, and blind to Beauty, deaf to Song. I lay beside the sobbing stream, all through the golden summer day, and journeyed on a magic dream to fairy regions far away; the sky was blue, the day was hot—as hot as weather ever was; and still my neighbor sternly wrought, and hoed his beans without a pause. Alas, the days of June were gone; I heard the voice of Winter rave, and shivered in an arctic dawn, and wept for summers in their grave; my empty cupboard brought to mind my sordid neighbor's bounteous store, and so I dared the shrieking wind, and got a handout at his door.

Business Prose - Poems

Mary's Lamb.

MISS MARY had a little lamb;
the fact's well known, gadzooks!
With many a chart and diagram,
it's written in the books. And
it is also written there how Mary went to
school, and how the teacher broke a chair
upon the lambkin's wool; but history nar-
rates no more, and Mary and her sheep
drop out of all the schoolhouse lore, and in
oblivion sleep. Oh, Mary, when you lived
your days, so long, so long ago, this weary
world had simpler ways, and lambs were
white as snow! Yes, lambs were white as
snow, my dear, and little maids like you
would curtsy once and disappear, when
their brief stunts were through. If you were
living in this age of dust and sounding
brass, we'd see you prancing on the stage,
and eke the lamb, alas! The teacher, too,
who turned him out, as though he were a
dog, would hold the boards a while and
spout a dreary monologue. The children,
too, who lingered near, would profit by
their fame; between the acts they would
appear and spring the "comic" game. Oh,
all would do their little spiels, and draw
their princely wage; the schoolhouse
would be put on wheels, and hauled across
the stage!

Business Prose - Poems

Toiler and Dreamer.

I SAT at the feet of the poet, and I heard that poet say: "The dreamer lives forever, and the toiler dies in a day!" In love with the poet's genius, and charmed by his sweet refrain, I said: "I will cease to labor, for labor imparts a pain; afar to the land of lotus on shimmering dreams I'll stray, for the dreamer lives forever, and the toiler dies in a day!" Then up spake my Aunt Eliza, and this was her message: "Rats! The poet is talking nonsense! His head-piece is full of bats! The dreamer is but a loafer, who ought to be in the pound; I bow to the busy worker who's making the wheels go round! The dreamer is sitting idle, a-whittling a hemlock club, and his wife is bearing burdens or laboring at the tub. The toiler is earning money as he journeys his useful way; he's putting away a bundle for age and the wintry day. The dreamer is writing verses on mermaids and stars and pools; the toiler is paying taxes and helping to build the schools. The song I have heard you singing is that of a lazy jay; the dreamer goes to the poorhouse, while the toiler's baling hay!"

Business Prose - Poems

Whiskers

MAN shaves with all his might, and keeps the lather flowing; he shaves by day and night, and whiskers keep on growing. The corn may wilt and die in hot winds that are blowing beneath a brazen sky, but whiskers keep on growing. The crop of wheat may fail, the oats may make no showing, while ruined farmers wail, but whiskers keep on growing. I've lost my crop of beans, there are no peas surviving; but still my whiskerines are flourishing and thriving. The plants that bring us mon all kinds of care are needing; we labor in the sun, at hoeing and at weeding; when shipped they bring us dough, to pay us for their crating; and still our whiskers grow, and need no cultivating. We do not sprinkle them with Paris green and water, the ravages to stem of bugs that gnaw and slaughter; we do not set up poles between the rows of whiskers, or set our traps for moles, field mice and other friskers. Our whiskers need no care, no chemicals to nourish; they rear their fronds in air like island palms, and flourish. But in the marketplace, where people buy and barter, the whiskers on your face won't bring a bogus quarter. And that's the way things go throughout the world, my neighbor; the things that bring us dough are fruits of care and labor.

Business Prose - Poems

The Dipper.

HOW dear to my heart was the trusty old dipper that hung by the pump in the brave days of old! It made a man frisky, contented and chipper, to drink from that dipper a draught sweet and cold. We came from the harvest field, where we'd been goaded by ruthless employers, and kept on the jump, and stood there and drank till our innards exploded, and blessed the old dipper that hung by the pump; that rusty tin dipper, that weather stained dipper, that life giving dipper that hung by the pump. But now, in the blistering heat of the June time, we go to the well with our tongues hanging out, and wrestle around that old pump all the noon time, in trying to drink a few drops from the spout. The bughouse germ doctors have banished the flagon from which we all drank when we met at the pump; no more can the boys get a hard water jag on; the trusty old dipper has gone to the dump; the long handled dipper, the mail order dipper, the soul soothing dipper has gone to the dump!

Business Prose - Poems

The Jealous

ONE time there was a man of brain who early learned to strive and strain, and make each passing minute count; and so he climbed up Fortune's mount, and took possession of the top; and there he heard the failures yawp. Their voices came from far below, surcharged with hatred, malice, woe. "It's true he passed us on the way," he heard the sad-eyed failures say; "but he has conquered by a fluke; the fates, that gave us grim rebuke, and gall and wormwood by the peck, for him had nod, and smile, and beck. He gathered roses day by day, but only thistles came our way; such luck as his will help a man far more than any merit can; if merit counted we'd be now up there upon the mountain's brow, and he'd be rustling far below, where thistles, weeds and sandburs grow. This world is cold and bleak and drear; injustice is the order here; the men who ought to win the prize get slugged by Fate, between the eyes, and skates who should be in the soup, go soaring skyward with a whoop." The man who stood on high, alone, took from his grip a megaphone, and through it shouted to the jays who jarred the mountain with their brays: "Cut out complaint and idle yawp; work! work! and you may reach the top!"

Business Prose - Poems

Salted Samoleons

COME, let us strain both brawn and brain, to pile up mighty heaps of plunder; O let us toil, and grind, and moil, and let amusement go to thunder! In divers climes we'll nail the dimes, by methods white, or methods yellow; we'll keep up steam, and plan and scheme, and sometimes soak the other fellow. We have no time for song or rhyme, or plays or other things diverting; the eager lust for dough and dust is gripping us until it's hurting. We have no heart for works of art, for statues sculpted by grand old masters; our greenback dreams and get there schemes stick tighter than adhesive plasters. We can't afford to leave our board for half a day to go a-fishing; to grab the plunk and kindred junk—that is the burden of our wishing. And thus we strive while we're alive, and jog upon our joyless journey; and when we croak—this is the joke—our wad is swiped by some attorney!

Business Prose - Poems

It Might Be Worse

MISFORTUNES are thick in this valley of tears, the moans of the sorrowful come to our ears; the law of hard luck seems the governing law, and a package of grief is the prize that we draw. But if we would cut out the weeping and sighs, and quit pumping brine from out water-logged eyes, we'd soon find our troubles and sorrows disperse; for there's nothing so bad that it couldn't be worse. It's well to reflect, when you're burdened with care and Trouble comes down with his feet in the air, that others have suffered as deeply as you, and raised just as much of a hullabaloo, and others have found that a bundle of woe is easy to lose, if you only think so. From the day you are born till you ride in the hearse, there is nothing so bad that it couldn't be worse. One day I was ranting around, pretty glum, for a felon was holding the fort on my thumb; the surgeon came in with his saw, and avowed that I was a baby for yelling so loud; "I sawed off the leg of your neighbor," he said, "and never a whimper came out of his head." Oh, it's true as you live that—excepting this verse—there is nothing so bad that it couldn't be worse!

Business Prose - Poems

The Agents

NOW the festive agent wakes from his lengthy winter sleep, and his cheerful way he takes, selling doodads wondrous cheap. You may hear him at the door, for he's always on the job, and he'll go away no more till he sells a thingumbob; till he sells a patent churn, or a thing for grinding hash, or a lamp that will not burn, or a can of succotash; or a mile of lightning rod, or a sheet-iron feeding trough—O, he'll touch you for your wad, and you cannot head him off! Which is why I rise to say that there ought to be a law, giving men the right to slay agents of the rubber jaw; and to plant them in the yard where the doodlewhangers grow, and to press the dirt down hard, and some jimpson seed to sow. For the things the agents sell are the things we never need; and the talk they love so well makes the hearts of victims bleed.

Business Prose - Poems

Trouble Either Way.

I THREW my money at the birds; and sages came with warning words, and talked about the rainy day. "You ought to file your scads away," the sages said, "for winter use; don't always have your purse-strings loose. You may fall sick, or blind, or dumb, and when the high-priced sawbones come, and druggists charge you for their pills and nurses spring their little bills, you'll breathe a wish, in bitter tones, that you had salted down some bones." Their discourse was so wise and grave that I at once began to save; I carried bundles to the bank until exertion made me lank; I saved and saved until my roll would do to plug a stovepipe hole, and then (it broke the banker's heart!) I blew it for a motor-cart. It's painted red and gold and green, and fairly thirsts for gasoline. It pants and snorts and smokes and tears, and wildly calls for more repairs. I like the good old spendthrift way, to blow one' roubles day by day; I like to waste wealth as it comes, in small and unobtrusive sums; that's better than to skimp and shave, and pinch, economize and save for months together, like a dunce, and then blow in your wad at once.

Business Prose - Poems

The Commercial Basis.

I HAVE lived a long time in this valley of tears, and my head has been whitened by hurrying years; I've sized up the world as I toddled along, I've sampled the right and I've sampled the wrong; I have herded with goats and I've frolicked with sheep, I have learned how to laugh, and I've learned how to weep; I have loafed, I have dreamed, I have whacked up some wood, and I'm sure of this fact, that it pays to be good. When-e'er I do wrong, with malicious intent, then I feel for a while like a counterfeit cent; I would swap myself off for a watch made of brass, I haven't the courage to look in the glass. But when I do right, then how chesty I feel! The village is filled with my jubilant spiel! I feel that a feather is placed in my hood, and I guess I am right, for it pays to be good! Oh, what are the things of particular worth? And what are the prizes we gain upon earth? They are not the gems that go clickety-clank, they are not the bundles we have in the bank. Respect of our neighbors, the love of our friends, some credit up there where the firmament bends—these things are the guerdon for which we should strive, they give us an object in being alive. And you'll never gain them, as gain them you should, unless you believe that it pays to be good.

Business Prose - Poems

Once in a While

ONCE in a while I am weary, and sick of the harrowing grind; weary of losing the orange, and chewing away at the rind; weary of putting up castles, and calling them castles of hope, only to find they are bubbles, and made of inferior soap. Once in a while I grow weary of seeing the other men win, while I am fussing behind them, bewailing the box I am in; all that I do is so futile, and all that I hope is in vain; I seem to be shy of the wisdom to try to get out of the rain. Once in a while I grow weary of living on soup bones and slaw; ah, how I'm longing and yearning to feed a large pie to my jaw! Then I grow morbid and bitter, and savagely gnaw at my pen; why can't I win in life's battle, like other more fortunate men? Once in a while I grow lucid, and place a wet towel on my head, and say to these morbid reflections: "Go, roost with the things that are dead! Heaven has treated me better than such a four-flusher deserves; it's me for my highest endeavor, so watch, and get onto my curves!"

Business Prose - Poems

Plutocrat and Poet

GOOD old opulent John D.! He would look with scorn on me; I consider I'm in luck, when I have an extra buck; buying ice or buying coal always keeps me in the hole, and when I have paid the rent I am left without a cent. Yet I'm always gay and snug, happy as a tumblebug, having still the best of times, grinding out my blame fool rhymes! Old John D., on t'other hand, frets away to beat the band; he is burdened with his care—though he isn't with his hair—and his health is going back, and his liver's out of whack, and his conscience has grown numb, and his wishbone's out of plumb, and he's trembling all the day lest a plunk may get away. Better be a cornfed bard, writing lyrics by the yard, with an appetite so gay it won't balk at prairie hay, than to have a mighty pile, and forget the way to smile!

Business Prose - Poems

Saturday Night

SATURDAY night, and the week's work done, and the Old Man home with a bunch of mon! You see him sit on the cottage porch, and he puffs away at a five-cent torch, while the good wife sings at her evening chores, and the children gambol around outdoors. The Old Man sits on his work-day hat, and he doesn't envy the plutocrat; his debts are paid and he owns his place, and he'll look a king in the blooming face; his hands are hard with the brick and loam, but his heart is soft with the love of home! Saturday night, and it's time for bed! And the kids come in with a buoyant tread; and they hush their noise at the mother's look, as she slowly opens a heavy book, and reads the tale of the stormy sea, and the voice that quieted Galilee. Then away to bed and the calm repose that only honesty ever knows. Saturday night, and the world is still, and it's only the erring who find things ill; there is sweet content and a sweeter rest, where a good heart beats in a brave man's breast.

Business Prose - Poems

Wanderlust

THE place he lived in never suited; he hankered to be gone; and so he packed his grip and scooted, a little farther on. A while he paused in our calm valley, where all the virtues bloom, but left it for a frowsy alley, and seventh-story room. And when of city life he wearied, he northward turned his toes, and hired an Eskimo, and Pearyed among the Arctic snows. And when of toes about a dozen were icy, stiff and stark, he left those regions, white and frozen, for jungles hot and dark. His youthful friends grew fat and wealthy, with children at their knees, and made their homes in climates healthy, but he'd have none of these. Some other place was always better than that where he abode, and so, on snow-shoes or in sweater, again he hit the road. And when this wanderer was dying, one cold and dreary dawn, "I'll have some fun," they heard him sighing, "a little farther on!"

Business Prose - Poems

The Tightwad

THE tightwad is a pleasant soul who freezes strongly to his roll, until he hasn't any; his bundle colors all his dreams, and when awake he's full of schemes to nail another penny. He counts his roubles day by day, and when a nickel gets away, it nearly drives him dotty; he grovels to the man of biz who has a bigger roll than his, and to the poor he's haughty. All things upon this earth are trash that can't be bought or sold for cash, in Tightwad's estimation; the summer breeze, because it turns the cranks of mills and pumps and churns, receives his toleration; the sum is useful in its way; it nourishes the wheat and hay—so let the world be sunny; he likes to hear the rain-drops slosh; they help the pumpkin, beet and squash, and such things sell for money. The tightwad often is a bear around his home, and everywhere, and people hate or fear him; since kindness has no market price, it's waste of effort to be nice to victims who are near him. Methinks that when the tightwad dies, and to his retribution flies, his sentence will be funny; they'll load him with a silver hat, and boil him in a golden vat, and feed him red-hot money!

Business Prose - Poems

The Important Man

YOU know the man of kingly air?
You run across him everywhere.
He seems to think his hat a crown;
he talks as though he handed
down most all the wisdom that the seers
have gathered in a thousand years. His
dignity is most sublime; to joke about him
is a crime, and when you meet him it is
wise to lift your hat and close your eyes;
and it would please him if you'd just lie
down and grovel in the dust. That is the
wiser course. I say, but I'm a feeble-
minded jay, and when I meet the swelled-
up man, I jolly him the best I can; I would
to him the fact recall that he's but mortal,
after all. He's naught but bones and legs
and trunk, and lungs and lights, and kin-
dred junk; he breathes the same old germ
y air that's breathed by hoboos everywhere.
And when he dies, as die he must, he'll
make as cheap a grade of dust as any Rich-
ard Roe in town; the monument that holds
him down may tell his glories for a while,
but folks will read it with a smile, and say:
"That dead one must have thought that
he was Johnnie on the spot, when he was
on this earthly shore; I never heard of
him before."

Business Prose - Poems

The Showy Horse.

I SAID: "I'll take Bucephalus and drive him twenty miles; he's always pawing in the barn, and puts on lots of style; he's suffering for exercise; he's eager for the fray, and he will fairly eat the road and throw the leagues away!" I hitched him up and started off; he fairly split the wind, and I was full of harmless pride, and held the reins and grinned. The charger trotted half a mile as though from mortar fired, and then he lost all interest, and seemed extremely tired. I wore out half a dozen clubs, and urged him to go fast; in vain! he loafed along the road and watched the snails whiz past; I pushed him on the homeward road for many a weary verst, and then I sold him to a friend, and now he's wienerwurst. I know a half a hundred men just like that foaming steed; they go to work as though they'd make their eager fingers bleed; they fuss and sweat and paw the ground, and make an awful din, but when the mid-day heat comes on, their energy's all in. I like the good old steady horse that plods along his way, as though determined that he'll earn his lodging and his hay; I like the quiet, earnest man, who buckles to his job without the sort of useless fuss that captivates the swab.

Business Prose - Poems

Pretty Good Schemes

IT'S a pretty good scheme to be cheery, and sing as you follow the road, for a good many pilgrims are weary, and hopelessly carry the load; their hearts from the journey are breaking, and a rod seems to them like a mile; and it may be the noise you are making will hearten them up for a while. It's a pretty good scheme in your joking, to cut out the jest that's unkind, for the barbed kind of fun you are poking, some fellow may carry in mind; and a good many hearts have been broken, a good many hearts fond and true, by words that were carelessly spoken by alecky fellows like you. It's a pretty good scheme to be doing some choring around while you can; for the gods with their gifts are pursuing the earnest, industrious man; and those gods, in their own El Dorado, are laying up wrath for the one who loafs all the day in the shadow, while others toil, out in the sun.

Business Prose - Poems

A Rise in Value

THE farmer said to James, his son: "Old Dobbin's usefulness is done; I've worked him now for thirty years, and while it fills my eyes with tears to have you shoot him through the head, it's better for him to be dead." The son replied: "A railway train has saved us all that grief and pain; old Dobbin got upon the track—a train came up and broke his back." "Great spoons!" the farmer cried, "I'll write a letter to the road to-night! I'll see if it can maim and slay fine-blooded stock, and get away! That hoss was sired by 'Norman Chimes,' that won the Derby seven times. I just was thinking, sitting there, that I would show him at the fair, and take in first or second prize, and now he's dead, dad bing my eyes! That hoss could gallop for a week, and then get down and trot a streak. I scarcely ever go to town but men with money run me down, and ask if Dobbin is for sale; when I say no, they fairly wail. And Dobbin's dead, my cherished steed! The doggone road that made him bleed will pay his value, if there's a law, or justice east of Omaha! A thousand bones, and nothing less, will take the edge off my distress!"

Business Prose - Poems

Dry Weather.

J PLUVIUS turned not the crank that operates his water tank. He watched the baking earth below, and heard the people wail in woe, but not a bit did he relent; he didn't seem to care a cent. Old Vulcan heard the people's wails, where he was making horse-shoe nails, and said: "Say, Pluve, turn on the drink! Those folks below are on the blink." But Pluvius replied: "Gee whiz! You'll teach me how to run my biz? I tell you, Vule, those mortal men must have a lesson now and then. For many years I've sent them rain, and crops have grown on every plain. Prosperity was at their doors, where now the wolf of famine roars. And while I kept their planet wet, there was a carnival of debt. Men blew their substance, wild and free, as though it grew upon a tree. Their stock of luxuries enlarged, they bought fool things and had them charged. Men threw their money at the stars, and traded homes for chug-chug cars, and rioted at every chance, like drunken sailors at a dance. Ant so I cooked their blamed old earth, to teach them what good fortune's worth. When they have chewed on husks a while they'll learn to save their little pile."

Business Prose - Poems

Killing Time.

O H, it sort o' seems to me, as I face eternity, and consider how much work I have in view, that the biggest earthly crime is this thing of killing time, which so many idle fellows seem to do. I am evermore in haste; I have not an hour to waste; I've a million things to do before I die; and the minutes as they flee are as precious unto me as the diamonds that an actress wants to buy. Now he comes, with nerve sublime, some tired bore who's killing time, and he has a grist of stories he would tell; by my writing desk he stops, and he gurgles and he yawps, till I take an ax and kill him, with a yell. People partial to this crime of annihilating time might be pardoned if they'd only kill their own; but they murder yours and mine—kill our moments as they shine, butcher minutes which are rightly ours alone. Which is why I say in rhyme that the men who kill our time should be banished to an island in the sea, where, among the leafy bow'rs they can kill a string of hours and not have a chance to bother you and me.

Business Prose - Poems

The Discontented

ALL the fiercest wails you hear, wails of discontent, come from men who, through the year, seldom earn a cent. Go wherever loafers rest, friendless and alone, and from every idle breast, there will rise a groan. Of the woes 'neath which they stand, they'll give catalogues; they will show you that the land travels to the dogs. They will name a lot of laws that the country needs; they will wail and wag their jaws till your bosom bleeds; they will work their jaws and tongues, beating all the bands; they will work their willing lungs—but they rest their hands. Folks who in the good old way toil with all their might, working out their stunts by day, going home at night, don't have time to wail and shriek o'er our downward race, don't have much desire to seek any wailing place. Toiling on, as best they can, on their little stage, treating fairly every man, earning all their wage, salting down some honest bones. for the day of rain—what to them are all the groans, why should they complain? There's a cure for all the ills which too long endure; laws are merely nostrum pills, Work's the safest cure.

Business Prose - Poems

The Breadwinner.

HE breaks his back and he breaks his heart as he toils away in the clanging mart. His griefs have whitened his scanty hair, and he is bent 'neath a load of care. He's an old man now, though in years he's young, and his feet are tired and his knees are sprung; from the treadmill stunt he is never free, and his wife is planning a Yellow Tea. He's sweating blood when the bills fall due, and he walks the floor all the long night through; and he has dreams of a sombre day when a sheriff's deputy comes his way. He greets the dawn with a sinking heart; he wears his clothes till they fall apart; no rest for him till he'll cross the ridge—and his wife is playing a game of bridge. To earn good money and see it go for social frivols—ah, that is woe! To work like bees in our human hives, to gather honey for wastful wives! To grind and worry and walk the street, with spavined bosoms and aching feet! It's hard to labor and sweat in vain—but then the matrons must entertain.

Business Prose - Poems

Evenings at Home

WHEN the day's work is done, with its trouble and care, with a little of joy and a lot of despair, then it's pleasant to go to your children and wife, and show them the latest in wrangling and strife. If you're mean as get out, then you'll find it a joy, to wear out your grouch on your wife or the boy, to snarl and to grumble, and rear up and whine, and show that you're boss of your figtree and vine. In thousands of homes there are tyrants who roar till the carpets curl up on the sitting-room floor, and thousands of women are waiting with dread for the homecoming hub and his masterful tread; and thousands of children turn pallid with fear, when they know that the neighborhood Bluebeard is near. The tyrant who bosses a woman around, and scares all the kids with his lion-like sound, would take to the brush if a large, healthy man expressed an ambition to fracture his can. And the meanest excuse that a tyrant can give for making his people regret that they live, is the timeworn excuse that his office affairs have ruined his nerves with their burden of cares; he ought to go home as a groom to his bride, and let his old office and all its griefs slide.

Business Prose - Poems

The Simple Life

I 'M tired of all the sordid cares that mark the city life; the noise, the pitfalls and the snares, the stratagems and strife; so back to Nature let me fly, and, by the woodland streams, with star reporters standing by, I'll weave my shining dreams. Afar from this, my urban home, I fain would go and dwell, beneath the lordly oaks to roam, and in the sylvan dell, where bird songs float upon the breeze, and blooms the woodland rose, and kodak men, among the trees, might catch my every pose. How sweet to breathe the purer air, that blows o'er fragrant lawns, to sleep at night without a care, and wake in golden dawns! To leave these buildings, grim and tall, and wander off alone, where city editors might call me up by telephone.

Business Prose - Poems

Retrospection

WHEN I look over the musty past,
that lies in eternal shade, re-
grets come over me, thick and
fast, regrets for the breaks I've
made. I fooled away many golden years,
as though I had years to burn, and out of
their ashes I gather tears, but the joys do
not return. Dame Fortune knocked at my
humble door, with honors and fame and
pelf; but I turned in bed with a lazy snore,
and told her to chase herself. I browsed
around on the old dead grass, while
t'others were in the fold; I always loaded
myself with brass, while others were after
gold. And now, alas! in the yellow leaf,
I'm busted and down at heel, and I could
let out a yell of grief that would make
your blood congeal. But away from the
moldy past I turn, to the future, glad and
free, to the skies above, where the red
stars burn—and you won't hear a howl
from me!

Business Prose - Poems

Contentment

THE weather, as you'll all agree, is most intensely hot; and yet I would not sail the sea in an expensive yacht; for I can swipe a chunk of ice, and buy a palm-leaf fan, and they will keep me just as nice and cool as any man. My poor old legs all spavined are, from chasing through the town, but if you brought a motor car, I'd surely turn it down; if some time, weary of my cares, I wish to end them all, my humble home has cellar stairs, down which a man may fall. They say it's mighty fine to soar upon an aeroplane, away above the city's roar, and close to Charles's wain; but should it seem to me discreet, some day, to break my back, I'll walk a block and take a seat upon the railway track. My friends are going to the woods to camp and hunt and fish; to haunt the silent solitudes is some men's dearest wish; but if a similar hermit plan to me should e'er look wise, I'll go and visit with the man who does not advertise. There is no sense in making tracks for Timbuctoo or Rome, when you are anxious to relax, for you can rest at home. There's nothing that men travel for, in parties or alone, that I can't order from the store at any hour, by phone.

Business Prose - Poems

Weary Old Age.

IT was a bent and ancient man who toiled with spade and pick, and down his haggard features ran the sweat-drops, rolling thick. And, as he toiled, his gasping sighs spoke darkly of despair; a hopeless look was in his eyes, a look of grief and care. He toiled, all heedless of the crowd that journeyed to and fro; "it is a shame," I said, aloud, "that Age should suffer so." He overheard me, and he said: "I earned this fate, in truth; when young I stained the landscape red; I was a Gilded Youth. I bought the merchandise that's wet, I fooled with games of chance; and now, in misery and sweat, I wear the name of Pance. I was a rounder and a sport, a spender and a blood, and now, when I loom up in court, my only name is Mud. I filled my years with gorgeous breaks, I thought my life a game; I threw my money to the drakes, and wallowed deep in shame. I used to hate the sissy-boys, those molly-coddle lads, who were content with milder joys, and salted down the scads; and now I see them passing by, in opulence and ease, while I, too luckless e'en to die, am doing tasks like these. Sometimes, in rack-ing dreams I see the money that I burned; but do not waste your tears on me—I'm getting what I earned!"

Business Prose - Poems

Man's Errands

TOILING up and down the street, in the wintry snow, in the summer's glare and heat, evermore we go; not an hour have we to waste, till the day is gone; in our frenzied, foolish haste, always pressing on. In our youth we're gray and bent; alway worried much, lest perchance an old red cent may escape our clutch; driving others to the wall, working tooth and nail, making plans—and after all, what do they avail? Rustling, hustling in the strife, adding to our pile; missing all there is in life, that is worth our while. We've forgotten how to play, since becoming men; bring us back the yesterday, make us boys again! Let's forget a while the dimes, and the stocks and bonds; let us go, as in old times, swimming in the ponds! Robbing nests of bumblebees, for the honey heap, swiping apples from the trees, while the dog's asleep! Idle dream of idle mind! Dreams like this are wrong; sentenced to the sordid grind, we must plod along; wearing out the city's pave, wearing out our souls; ever onward, till the grave parts us from our rolls!

Business Prose - Poems

Soliloquy of Croesus.

FOR fifty years I've gathered gold, and made it yield a hundred fold. I have controlled the world's supply of vegetable whiskers dye; in every hamlet in the land where whiskers dye is in demand, I've had my agents, all alert, for any sort of tricks or dirt. I've ruined scores who'd sell or buy an independent whiskers dye; I've hounded dealers to the tomb, and filled their widow's homes with gloom. I've been a cast-iron Juggernaut, that rolled along, nor gave a thought to anything but nailing scads—the good old dollars of our dads. And now that I am worn and old, and days are sad and nights are cold, ghosts walk with me—a grisly crew—the ghosts of men I wrecked and slew. They wander with me, grim and stark; they gather round me in the dark; they point their fleshless hands, and cry: “A camel through a needle's eye can quicker leap than you can rise, with all your plunder, to the skies!” I hear that weird refrain all day; and so I'll give my wealth away. I'm near the ending of the road, and so I'll hasten to unload; and then, perhaps, the last mileposts won't find me walking with the ghosts!

Business Prose - Poems

Conscience

I BELIEVE a fellow's conscience is a pretty faithful guide; if he follows where 'twould lead him, he won't stray so very wide. When I'm hustling for a living in the city's busy mart, I'm so full of schemes resplendent that the voice down in my heart doesn't have a chance to warn me and I do some doubtful trick, going to my shack at evening feeling sure that I'm a brick. When a man has nailed some roubles in a smooth and quiet way, he is full of triumph and he hands himself a large boquet. I have often felt exalted by my conquest of the plunk, till I shed my gaudy raiment, and lie down upon my bunk. Then my good old conscience prods me, in the silence and the dark, and it shows me that my doings are the doings of a shark. "It is better," says my conscience, holding down the judgment seat, "it is better to be honest, and barefooted walk the street, than to count a pile of dollars won by trickery or fraud; till you've squared your evil-doing I shall never cease to prod." So my conscience sits in judgment through the watches of the night, and in following its hunches I am sure I'm doing right.

Business Prose - Poems

Richard Roe

POOOR old seedy Richard Roe! There is naught he doesn't know of the kennel and the street and the hobo's foul retreat. There is nothing he can't tell of the ante-mortem hell. Drifting on life's stormy wave, he's a wreck, unfit to save; drifting, drifting with the flow, where the shipwrecked mortals go. Richard is a trying sight; once his countenance was white, but it's rusty with the grime of an elder, ancient time; and his rags are passing foul, and he has a wolfish jowl; and his story's trite and stale, as he paces in the jail; he's completely out of chink—and it's saddening to think that this effigy defiled, must have been one day a child! It is saddening to know that above this Richard Roe, with his face by evil seamed, once a mother bent and dreamed! Prayed and dreamed—above that face—that he'd take an honored place, in this great, wide world of men—truly, she was dreaming then! There are many Richard Roes, drifting—whither no one knows—where life's billows sweep and swing; and it seems a blessed thing that so many mothers die, ere they see the wrecks drift by!

Business Prose - Poems

The Age of Invention

NO wonder that one's spirit freezes! They're always finding new diseases to rob us of our breath; each day the scientists affright us with something new that ends with "itis," and scares us half to death. In olden times the ills were simple; they ranged from jaundice to a pimple; and simple was the dope; the doctor came, as smooth as satin, and spoke some words in bughouse Latin, and bade us keep up hope. He'd prop us up and mildly jolt us by putting on a linseed poultice, or he would feed us pills; and then he'd soak us for a dollar, which maddened us until we'd holler, and thus forget our ills. In those old days, in mem'ry cherished, we seldom of a sickness perished; we'd live till bent and gray; as old, old men we'd drool and drivel, until like Autumn leaves we'd shrivel, and like them blow away. But now, when we are feeling dizzy, the learned physicians all get busy, and stand around our bunk, and feel our pulse, and prod and smite us, and say we have some blamed old "itis;" all itises are punk. Then one of them his weapon greases, and saws us into three-inch pieces, regardless of our squeals; he takes us all apart, and pokes us, and sews us up again, and soaks us for seven hundred wheels.

Business Prose - Poems

In the Garden.

MY garden is sickly, and littered with wrecks; the beans wilted quickly, and passed in their checks. The sight, it is sad-dish; the cabbage is dead; the onion and radish lie cold in their bed. The night zephyrs whistle o'er wreck and decay, and only the thistle is blooming today. My strenuous labors this garden has known, while indolent neighbors looked on with a groan. I said: "I'll be eating fine succulent sass, while those men are treating their stomachs to grass." They said: "You may hoe, sir, and dig till you're sore, but we from the grocer will purchase our store." I slugged and lambasted the weeds with a hoe; my work was all wasted, and I'm full of woe. My garden is dreary as Sidon or Tyre, and oh, I am weary, while twanging my lyre! And this is the moral for others who fail to cultivate sorrel and onions and kale: A man needs some training his task to pursue, or he'll be complaining, disgusted and blue.

Business Prose - Poems

The Secret of Health.

MY health is out of sight; I'm always feeling right; with joyous spiels I kick my heels, and dance by day and night. I take no pale green pills for any kind of ills; and so escape a wreath of crape and sidestep doctor's bills. I shun the faddist's talk; I eat no grated chalk, I hit no can of liquid bran or shredded cabbage stalk. I dodge the patent foods and predigested goods, and oatmeal cakes and other fakes of Dr. Hutchiwoods. My stomach is my friend, and will be to the end; it treats me fair and I'll be square, and no junk to it send. Don't feed your stomach hay, don't fill it full of whey, but feed it steaks and frosted cakes—your appetite obey. Ah me, I'd rather die than give up raisin pie! And all the schemes the doctor dreams I don't intend to try. The good old ancient seers! They lived eight hundred years! They used to eat all kinds of meat and hash and roastin' ears!

Business Prose - Poems

Ben Davis Apples

THE Ben Davis apple is lovely in hue, it seems to invite you to step up and chew. It's pretty and shapely, its profile is fine—but I do not long for Ben Davis in mine. To eat a Ben Davis is wasting your time; it tastes like a mattress and drives you to crime. I ate a Ben Davis when I was quite young, and now I recall it whenever I'm stung. It taught me a lesson, a lesson I prize, it sharpened my wolf-teeth and opened my eyes. And now when a faker comes up to my door, to sell me some stock in a mine full of ore, I think of Ben Davis, and say to him "Nix," and tell him to vanish and pelt him with bricks. And when I encounter an oily-tongued jay, too sweet and too gracious for man made of clay, professing affection approaching to love, I think of Ben Davis, and give him a shove. I read in the magazine pages of men who'd make us all wealthy, again and again; they're brokers or dealers in moonshine and mist—just send them two bucks and they'll mail you a list! Their glittering spiels don't appeal to my wits; I think of Ben Davis, and throw a few fits.

Business Prose - Poems

Good Advice

YOU are wasting your lives! Like the bees in their hives you work for the large silver wheel; and you stick to the job till your nerves are a-throb, and life is run down at the heel. With moiling have done! Get out in the sun and take from Dame Nature a fall; if your future seems dark, chase yourself to the park, and look at the fellows play ball. I used to be tied to a desk, weary-eyed and longed for release from life's ills; I anchored my hope to the horse doctor's dope, and filled up my inwards with pills. Then a friend came along—he was forceful and strong, and he carried me off, grouch and all, and I sat on a board and I howled and I roared as the boys on the diamond played ball. Now I'd think it a shame if I should miss a game and I go at my labors with vim; and my liver's all right, and my nerves are a sight, and the dope is no more in the swim. When you're feeling too old and all covered with mold, and your picture seems turned to the wall, hire a livery shark and go out to the park, and look at the fellows play ball!

Business Prose - Poems

As to Failure

THE other day a damsel fair, whose name I've laid aside, somewhere, procured a gun, to death inclined, and tried to end the beastly grind. She left a note in which she said she'd be a whole lot better dead. "I've failed at everything," she wrote; "misfortune early got my goat. I've written drama, tale and play, but publishers most always say, 'Oh, maiden, take your blooming junk, and with it line your tourist's trunk!' I've tried and tried, and can't catch on, my hopes are dead, my watch in pawn; but I have got a loaded gun, and so good-bye to every one!" She tried to work the magazines, but never thought of dishing beans in some hash joint, to hungry men; she labored with her fountain pen producing odes that no one read, but never thought of baking bread. And tens of thousands like this maid are going hungry, cold and frayed, and saying that the world's a fake, and life a big three-cornered ache, because they will not shed their coats and get right down to work like goats. It's better to politely starve than have a good big roast to carve that's earned by sweating in the sun; and hence the farewell and the gun.

Business Prose - Poems

Back to the Farm

LET us go back to the farm, my friend, back where the scents of the flowers ascend! We are both tired of the load of care, here in the town with its noise and glare! Let us go back to the farm, I say, wrestling around in a mow of hay. There we shall rise ere the break of dawn, pulling our frozen garments on; there we may wash at the horse's trough, trying to scour half the hayseed off. Let us, my friend, of the farm life think! Teaching the bone-headed calves to drink, carrying swill to a million sows, squeezing the milk from a million cows, crawling around 'neath the cattle shed, hunting for eggs that are old and dead! Let us go back to the farm, by James! Weary are we of these city games! Weary of smoking Key West cigars, weary of riding in motor cars, tired of the bath and the linen shirt, longing for cockleburs, pigs and dirt. Let us go back to the farm, by jings! Back where the riotous rooster sings!

Business Prose - Poems

The Rule of Life

A MOUNTAIN of books have been written, to show us the paths we should tread, and we have been laden with precepts, by sages both living and dead; and most of the wisdom is useless, for all that a man needs to do, is just to be gentle and true, lad, just to be gentle and true. The name of the teachers is legion who'd point out the road to success; they'd have us believe that the journey, unguided, is full of distress; the secret, however, is simple, and easy to carry in mind; it's just to be honest and kind, lad, just to be honest and kind. I don't care a cent for the theories and creeds that the wise men expound; for all of the words that are thundered are merely a wind and a sound; the logic of life is so simple, it leaves all the dogmas behind; it's just to be honest and kind, lad, just to be honest and kind.

Business Prose - Poems

The Days of Youth

LET us labor in the morning, for 'twill soon be afternoon; let us hustle in the vineyard, for the night is coming soon, when the old and weary dotards sit beside the fire and croon—and time is marching on. Let's improve the golden moments that cavort upon their way; there'll be time for idle dreaming in old age's wintry day; while the morn of life is with us let us put up lots of hay, for time is marching on. I have seen a county poorhouse where the paupers sighed and wept, for the wasted years behind them, when high carnival they kept, when they held their late carousal while the weary toilers slept, and time is marching on. I have seen dead people planted without sign of tears or ruth; they were hustled to the boneyard like a box of junk, in sooth; and they always were the people who had fooled away their youth; and time is marching on. Ah, in youth the golden moments seem a boundless, endless store, and we waste them as the children waste the pebbles on the shore! One by one the moments leave us, and they come to us no more, and time is marching on!

Business Prose - Poems

The Sphere of Genius.

THE sun was sinking in the west—
it seemed to do that stunt, at least;
I sometimes think it would be best
if it would set once in the east.

I'm weary of the changeless scheme on which the solar system runs; the same old moon looks down and beams, the same old stars, the same old suns. I'm in a plaintive mood today; a sheriff's writ is in my hand; I could not make my business pay—I could not run a peanut stand. My heart with deep resentment throbs against this weary world of lies. I wasn't built for trifling jobs—the solar system is my size. Or I could run the government, which now is run by statesmen daft; I'd make Champ Clark look like one cent, and show some things to old Bill Taft. To manage armies in the field, to deal in crowns and build up thrones, the sceptre of a king to wield—for that my lofty spirit hones. I'm hampered by this world's fool laws, which make me serve, who would command; and people jeer at me because I couldn't run a peanut stand.

Business Prose - Poems

The Dissatisfied Clerk

YOUNG Alexander Jimpson Jopp was working in a hardware shop, and as he wrapped up iron rails, and anvils, bolts and kegs of nails, and knives and screws and pigs of lead, he often to his fellows said: "This labor makes me tired, by jings! For I was built for higher things. I'm fitted to adorn the bench instead of selling monkey-wrench, and spade and hoe and tailor's geese, and evil-smelling axle grease." He loathed the work he had to do, and cussed it till the air was blue. Young Richard Henry James Kerflopp was also working in that shop; he carried anvils all the day, and as he toiled he used to say: "There may be better jobs than this, imparting more of ease and bliss, but I will do my best, and strive, to show the boss that I'm alive; I may be built for higher spheres, but I won't wet the shop with tears. If those blamed spheres are hunting me, they'll find me busy as a bee." Young Alexander Jimpson Jopp still sweats around that hardware shop, and carries anchors to and fro, and draws a paltry bunch of dough, while Richard Henry sits in state, wears hard-boiled shirts and pays the freight.

Business Prose - Poems

The Two Parents.

I HAVE heard Cap Jimpson say to his son: "Come hither, Jay, I'd be greatly pleased if you sundry little chores would do. You might paint the cistern pump, take those tin cans to the dump, cut in stove lengths yonder log, put a flynet on the dog. I am pleased to see you, lad, always prompt to help your dad, and a bone I'll hand you down when the circus comes to town." Then the blithe lad does his stunt with a gay and smiling front. I have heard Pap Bilkins cry to his son: "Get busy, Guy! Paint the kitchen roof with tar, worthless loafer that you are! You don't earn your room and keep, all you do is eat and sleep! When I was your age, you oaf, not a minute did I loaf! Stir your stumps, now, pretty quick, or I'll lam you with this stick!" To his task goes youthful Guy, with rebellion in his eye. Who will reach success some day, gloomy Guy or joyous Jay? If they win or lose the game, whose the credit, whose the blame?

Business Prose - Poems

Discouraging.

I ORDERED some potatoes down at the grocer's store; the price was something awful—I sat me down and swore. The grocer man informs me the price will stay up there; the crop is quite a failure, 'round here and everywhere. And so I see I'll have to subsist on beans and crusts; and this it is that grinds me—I cannot blame the trusts. If I could blame Pierp Morgan, and roast old Guggenheim, I'd do without potatoes and have a bully time. The crop has been a failure because the weather's dry, and so the Wall Street barons can prove an alibi. Now I must eat the pumpkin and chew the moldy prune, and know the robber tariff, like Wall Street, is immune. No one will pay attention if I should raise a fuss, and so my heart is broken—there's no one I can cuss. I've pondered till I'm weary, and no way can I see to charge the 'tater shortage to iron-souled John D. If I could only work it to make John D. the goat, I'd surely run for office and ask you for your vote.

Business Prose - Poems

Behind the Counter

MARY clerked in Whimple's store, and her heart was sick and sore, for poor Mary wasn't strong, and the hours were beastly long, and her pay was pretty slim, and the boss was sour and grim. Mary's nerves were worn to shreds, selling yarns and pins and threads. And one day a haughty dame to this salesgirl's counter came, wanting stuff to make a gown; and she made the girl hand down fifty tons or so of cloth; and she grew exceeding wroth 'cause the prices were too high; and she glared with fiery eye at the weary girl and said: "Hustle! try to earn your bread! Bring me half a carload more of the dress goods in your store! On those highest shelves I see fabrics that look good to me!" Then poor Mary, worn and weak, soaked that woman on the cheek; slugged her three times on the nose with a bolt of linen clothes, hit her roundly with a chair, pushed her down the cellar stair. In the court the case was tried, and poor Mary, weary-eyed, told her simple tale with tears, thinking she would get ten years. But the jurors, honest men, did not send her to the pen. "She's not guilty!" they all cried, and she's now the foreman's bride.

Business Prose - Poems

The Moneyless Man.

THE poets have sung in a harrowing strain of the moneyless man and his sorrow and pain. He gets the ice pitcher wherever he goes—no welcome for him, no relief for his woes! He is kicked from hotels by the janitor's feet, policemen begrudge him the use of the street, he's chased from the alleys as though but a dog, and turned from the doors of the swell synagogue; he must drag out his days in the best way he can—the world has no use for the moneyless man. Supposing it's true, why should cuss words be hurled like bricks at the poor old long-suffering world? In ninety-nine cases or more out of ten, the blame should be placed on the moneyless men; the lazy, the shiftless, when busted and wrecked, how much from the world are they due to expect? And why should industrious citizens give to loafers infesting the towns where they live? When bitter misfortune comes down on a guy who's shown that he's honest and willing to try, the world loosens up in a praiseworthy way, and does what it can for that suffering jay. But most of the hollow-eyed moneyless men have bunkoed this planet again and again. I don't blame the world that it's likely to pan on the chestnutty spiel of the moneyless man.

Business Prose - Poems

The Great Remedy

FOR those whose hearts are sick with care, for those who consort with despair, for those who work, for those who weep, there is no dope that equals sleep. The kind of sleep we used to know, when we were children, long ago, the kind of sleep that nature brings, wherein we hear seraphic wings, the kind of sleep that closed our eyes when soothed by mother's lullabys—ah, that's the balm for heart and brain, the cure for every mortal pain! One night of sleep is worth a ton of any drug beneath the sun. One night of sleep will do more good than all the doctors ever could. One night of sleep, when tired and blue, will fix you up as good as new. If you'd enjoy this noble balm, your soul must be serene and calm, and if that calmness you'd attain, your life should be without a stain. If, when you seek your downy bed, your conscience prods you in the head, recalling actions mean and base, your falsehoods in the market place, the evil things that you have wrought since last you occupied that cot, then sleep will vanish, shedding tears; the night will seem a hundred years.

Business Prose - Poems

Before and After.

IT is really rather funny how the man who's burning money finds a legion of admirers any place that he may stray. Everything he says is witty; all the Johnnies in the city gather round him to adore him while there's wealth to throw away. When he grows exceeding frisky in the gilded home of whisky, e'en the barkeeps make confession that he has a wealth of charms; and the peelers, evidently, love him, for they treat him gently, when his feet become entangled and he falls into their arms. O, the world is soft and tender to the lavish money spender and he thinks that people love him for his merits and his face; but when all his wealth is melted, he is hustled, he is pelted, and the barkeeps calmly kick him from the portals of their place. And the people who were smirking when his money he was jerking, call him names that hurt his feelings when he seeks a helping hand; and the haughty cops surround him, draw their little clubs and pound him, load him in the hurry wagon, and he's fined to beat the band. All the friends you gain by blowing money where the booze is flowing are not worth a cent a dozen—they're not worth the half of that; they will shake you when you're busted and will turn away disgusted when, to buy a little fodder, you attempt to pass the hat.

Business Prose - Poems

The Workers.

THE carpenter is driving some nails into a plank; the ostler's blithely striving to clean a charger's shank; the baseball artist pitches, the farmer plows for riches, the hired man's digging ditches, or toiling at a crank. The sailor ties his bow-knots and shins up tarry ropes; the baker cooks his doughnuts, the grocer sells his soaps; some chaps are busy clerking, or engine levers jerking, and other men are working, producing white men's hopes. I look upon my neighbors, and have new faith in man; each busy at his labors, and doing what he can; to be forever doing, achieving and pursuing, a-sawing wood and hewing—that is the only plan. But now the weird spellbinder appears upon the scene; he gnashes tusk and grinder with fierce and awful mien; he makes the toilers weary of work that once seemed cheery; he springs some foolish theory that rankles in his bean. The talkers, O the talkers, who rant and pirouette! Discouragers and mockers of all who toil and sweat! They keep the welkin dented, and all their noise is vented to make men discontented and sore, already yet!

Business Prose - Poems

The Wise Old Man.

THE old man sits in his figtree's shade, and fills himself with pink lemonade, and he smokes his pipe as he glances o'er the thrilling facts of the baseball score. He has no grief and he has no care, and he just leans back in his rocking chair, and views the world with a cheerful smile, for his larder's full, and he has his pile. The plan he followed you will indorse! He used to work like a bald-faced horse; he swung the ax and he plied the spade, and he knuckled down at the blacksmith's trade; wherever he worked, in the field or town, a part of his roubles he salted down. He saw the folly of spendthrift men, and took to the bank a large brass yen; they burned their money as though with fire; he took to the bank a big tin lire. And now he sits in his figtree's shade and eats ice cream with a wooden spade, and people smile as they look at him; he's fat and sassy and full of vim. And where are the fellows who drew their wage and blew it in, in that bygone age? Do they lean back in their rocking chairs, serene and happy and free from cares? Have they their figtrees and stuff to eat? Oh, ask the copper who walks your beat.

Business Prose - Poems

The Healer.

ARE you full of grief, my neighbor,
full of grief and woe? Shed your
raiment, then, and labor, and your
cares will go. Is your bosom torn
asunder, that you thus repine? Friends
of mine who work like thunder haven't
time to whine. Idlers stand about me
weeping, men with empty hands; and
the happy men are reaping o'er the fertile
lands. Life's a thing of cruel rigor for
the shiftless knaves; kind for men who
work with vigor, not as galley slaves. Fool-
ish your complaint and wailing, foolish
are your tears; work's the cure for all
your ailing, and your griefs and fears.
Work at anvil or at throttle, saw your pile
of wood! Never brought you in a bottle
remedy so good! Work, on land or on the
ocean, go and cut some grass! Never was
there pill or potion that was in work's
class! Work's the solace for the mortal
by life's ills distraught; it will make him
sing and chortle, it will hit the spot! Be
you statesman, soldier, bard or tiller of
the soil, if you're tired of work, work
harder! Nothing heals like toil!

Business Prose - Poems

Job's Patience.

MY friend the preacher tells a tale about a man who lived in Uz. "The ills he knew would make you pale; misfortunes used to round him buzz," so says my friend the preacher man, who shudders as he goes ahead; "he had big boils upon his can, and all his cows and hogs were dead. The way he suffered was a sin, and oft he wished he was on ice, and bores came up to rub it in by handing him some good advice. You snort around and kick and wail when little things seem out of plumb, yet this man's patience didn't fail when all the world was on the bum. He sat around his ruined home, and put fresh flaxseed on his boils, or scraped them with a curry-comb, or painted them with healing oils; he lay upon his humble couch and watched misfortunes come like rain; and yet he never was a grouch; he didn't cuss things or complain." "O, man," my friend the preacher cries, "it makes me tired to hear you whine! It does, dot rot my blooming eyes, when all the world is gay and fine!" "That chap in Uz," I humbly say, "you think the most ill used of men, and yet he was a lucky jay—he never used a fountain pen."

Business Prose - Poems

Money and Lives.

I MET the man who owns the mill, joy riding with a coachful, and stopped his motor on the hill, and said to him, reproachful: "A hundred damsels weave and spin, for you, for paltry wages; and will they all be fastened in when fire around them rages?" "I guess," he said, in accents hurt, "I guess they will be, sonny; for human lives are cheap as dirt, but fire escapes cost money. The people do not realize the burden rich men carry; the way my hard-earned money flies would paralyze Old Harry. My auto always needs repairs, my yacht is always yawning for coats of paint or easy chairs or miles of silken awning. To talk of fire escapes for mills is really rather funny, for human lives are cheap as pills, but fire escapes cost money. My bill for wines alone, my friend, would scare you into trances, and there are suppers without end, and forty kinds of dances. A trip to Europe every year requires a lot of boodle, and gems I bring to loved ones here all cost like Yankee Doodle. I cannot throw my scads away on mill equipment, sonny; for human lives are cheap as hay, but fire escapes cost money."

Business Prose - Poems

Lady Police.

METHINKS I've been arrested about a thousand times, by peelers pigeon-chested, for divers grades of crimes; and often it has pained me to note their lack of taste; sometimes they nearly brained me, by giving me a paste with lignum-vitæ billy, or No. 14 shoe; when they have knocked you silly, what can a mortal do? They will not brook discussion, your tears are no avail; they seem intent on rushin' your system into jail. And now they say the ladies desire policemen's beats; the Myrtles and the Sadies would guard the city streets. It is a scheme that cheers me, a plan as smooth as pearls! The whiskered copper queers me—produce the peeler girls! Soon may, with ribboned billy, sweet Jane her stunt begin, and nab your little Willie, and gently run him in! I've worn out all sensation, and life is but a bore; but this new innovation makes me sit up some more. Ah me, to be arrested by lovely girls in blue, bestarred and fully vested with power so to do! The lady cops—we need 'em! I'd rather be run in than have the boon of freedom, when once the girls begin!

Business Prose - Poems

Mortal Plans.

THE wise man said, one summer day: "Now eggs are cheap, for all hens lay, and so I'll buy a million kegs of these absurdly low priced eggs, and store them till the blizzards come, when henfruit works are out of plum, and then I'll bring them from my store, and clear a ton of wealth, or more." And so he leased a building tall, and filled it up, from wall to wall, with oodles of refreshing eggs, in crates, in boxes and in kegs. And then he waited for the time of shrieking gales and snow and rime, and planned a trip to Rome and Cork, with sundry nights off in New York. The winter came along full soon, but 'twas a running mate for June; the whizzing tempest didn't whiz, the raging blizzard failed to bliz; the hens were sure the month was May, and each laid seven eggs a day. The man of eggs soon went insane; which shows that human plans are vain. It also seems good evidence that hens have mighty little sense.

Business Prose - Poems

The Two Toilers.

TWO men pass my cottage door, on their way to do their work; one goes to a beeswax store, t'other is a sauerkraut clerk. One goes slouching on his way, sour of face and sad of eye; he will soldier all the day, count the hours as they drag by. So he journeys down the street, on his way to earn the mon, and he lifts his sluggish feet just as though they weighed a ton. Toil to him's a thing of tears, making him with anguish throb; when he's labored twenty years he will hold the same old job. T'other man goes prancing by with a step that's bold and free; there is ardor in his eye, and he whistles "Nancy Lee." He goes gaily to his task, not in bitterness and tears, and in fortune's smiles he'll bask as he travels down the years. For the gods adore the man who will work with might and main; and the shiftless pilgrim's plan void of virtue is and vain.

Business Prose - Poems

In the Boneyard

SOME blamed good fellows lie asleep down yonder where the tall grass waves, but no one ever comes to weep, or plant rosebushes on their graves. They calmly rest in paupers' beds, and wait the judgment, in a row, no shining tombstones o'er their heads, no requiem but the winds that blow. They were the shiftless, trifling lads, upon a weary world turned loose; they never learned to nail the scads and salt them down for winter use. It's pretty tough that some must sleep in unmarked, bargain counter graves, because their plunks they cannot keep; the honor's for the man who saves. A man whose eyes are wide apart, whose hands are reaching in his jeans, who listens rather to his heart than to the teachings of his brains, is apt to join the pauper crowd, and perish after many knocks, and wear a cheap, old-fashioned shroud, and slumber in a misfit box. Whereas, if he is shrewd and wise, with lips that close up like a hasp, and little space between the eyes, and hands that hang to what they grasp, his death will fill the town with gloom, and mourners will bewail the day, and he will have a corking tomb in which to loaf the years away.

Business Prose - Poems

A Few Don'ts

DON'T talk about the prize you'll win, or how you will pursue it, for boasts are like the clank of tin; don't talk—get down and do it. Don't say you'll cut the habits out, that make your friends uneasy; just turn your conduct face about—for talk is cheap and wheezy. About your seedy clothes don't talk, and say you'll soon be tony; go get the sort of duds that knock—for promises are phoney. Don't make some wild and foolish break and then beg people's pardon; such conduct makes them fairly ache to plant you in the garden. Don't try to tell a funny tale to friends who may be busy, or they will say you'd be in jail if peelers were not dizzy. Don't talk about your own concerns to one who's in a hurry; he doesn't care three tinkers' derns about your woe and worry. Don't blow a damp, hang-over breath into your neighbors' faces, or they will wish that Colonel Death would take you where his place is. Don't talk, unless the thing you'd say is truly worth the trouble; for work's the stuff that puts up hay, and talk is but a bubble.

Business Prose - Poems

"Grimes' Golden's."

W HERE is the stately Mr. Grimes, the noblest man of modern times, whose apple soothes and pleases? He surely is a crack-erjack; I'd like to pat him on the back, and hold him on my kneeses. I'd like to fold him to my breast, and say: "Your apple is the best that ever grew and ripened; I think so much of you that I would share with you my pumpkin pie, my taxes or my stipend." O let the good old name of Grimes be sounded by the evening chimes, and blazoned on the hoarding; his apple drives dull care away, and makes each heart seem light and gay, down here where I am boarding. O let the noble name of Grimes be handed down to future times, embalmed in song and story; his apple cheers, inspires and thrills, incites to splendid deeds, and fills our boarding house with glory. 'Twould be the foulest of all crimes if nevermore the name of Grimes should be on earth paraded; for he has brought a new delight—an apple that the gods would bite—and has old Burbank faded. O Grimes, I lack the poet's speech, or I would tell you what a peach you are, you dear old lummix! You've poured some balm upon our smarts; you've surely reached the people's hearts, and reached them through their stomachs!

Business Prose - Poems

The Bullied Witness

AT morn I saw him, for the courthouse bound, and glad smiles chased his jovial mug around; chipper was he, and blithe and gay and bold, kicking his heels like any two-year-old. At eve I saw him on his homeward way, broken with grief, and bent and worn and gray, laying the dust with tears that fairly steamed, and when I spoke he jumped ten yards and screamed. Through the long day, within the courthouse dim, lawyers had nagged and clawed and badgered him, asking him things and scorning his reply, proving that truth is but a futile lie; shaking their fists beneath his pallid nose, pawing the air and stamping on his toes. Aptly they showed, with eloquence unloosed, that he had robbed a widow's chicken roost; hence it was plain that all his evidence hadn't the worth of twenty phoney cents. And so that witness took his journey home; fear held his heart, and bats were in his dome; when from the peep-hole of his padded cell, he sees a lawyer, you may hear him yell.

Business Prose - Poems

Worth a Million.

I 'D fain be so successful that people, when I pass, will say: "He's worth a million—he puts up lots of grass!" The men who're worth a million find people bowing low, and there are smiles and greetings wherever they may go. I'd fain be worth a million, and so I'll do my best, to help along the luckless, and comfort the distressed; some portion of my income I'll hand out to the poor, and keep the wolf from howling at some old woman's door. I'll utter no complainings, or moans or useless whines, but pack around the village a mug that fairly shines. I'll stand up strong for virtue—the good old rugged sort; I don't believe in making an angel of a sport; I don't believe in virtue so horribly severe it frowns on all the follies of this old dizzy sphere. I'll boost my native village until my senses reel; I'll keep my shoulders ready to put them to the wheel; I'll knock all day on knocking, and kick the kickers down, and try to be an asset in this three-cornered town. And then I'll hear a murmur from 'preciative folk: "That man is worth a million, although he's going broke!"

Business Prose - Poems

Harvest Home

OUT in the country the farmers are singing, out in the fields where the corn's growing rank, soon in their autos they'll come to town, bringing oodles of money to put in the bank. Shocked is the wheat, and the people who buy it also are shocked at the price they must pay; prices of produce stir people to riot—everything's soaring, from butter to hay. Out in the country the milk-cow feels classy, prancing around on her long brindled legs; out in the country the hen's growing sassy, knowing the price that is placed on her eggs. Where is the farmer of old, who was ploddin' nearer the poorhouse whenever he stepp'd? Where is the tiller and toiler downtrodden, over whose woes we have frequently wept? Where is that husbandman, painfully draggin' out an existence of sorrow and debt? Coming to town in his gasoline wagon, loaded with all kinds of bullion, you bet! Out in the country the prospect's beguiling, music and laughter are heard on the breeze; women are singing, their husbands are smiling—money is growing on bushes and trees!

Business Prose - Poems

The Tired Optimist.

I SAID: "I'll sing a cheery song, and keep it up the whole day long; though every hour may troubles bring, I'll drive them off, and sing, and sing!" And so I warbled as I went, till neighbors came, in discontent, and cried: "For heaven's sake, let up! You're squawking like a poisoned pup, until the babies cannot sleep, and mothers grit their teeth and weep. Your voice is like a guinea hen's; then why disturb these quiet glens, and shatter all the window glass, and scare the horses as they pass? The modest workman does his chores, and never yells, and never roars; he does not whinny like a shoat, or bellow like an angry goat; he does not like a rooster crow, and fill the neighborhood with woe." And still I sing my joyous lay, while bricks and boots and bales of hay, and long-dead cats, and loaves of bread, and fossil bones whiz past my head.

Business Prose - Poems

Success

ATALL and pompous citizen pursues his stately way. "That man is worth five million bucks," we hear admirers say; and folks salute him as he goes, and wear the servile smile, and while he lingers in their view, they talk about his pile. It's good to have five million bucks, or half a million less, but being wealthy doesn't mean that you are a success. Of all the gifts the gods bestow, the commonest, I wot, is that of raking in the scads till friction makes them hot. There is no cross roads in the land but has its plutocrat, some village Astorbilt who hoards, and grows exceeding fat; but villages are far between, to judge from late returns, which breed a future Millet or a follower of Burns. It's good to have five million bucks, if they're not counterfeit; it's nice to chase yourself around, and feel that you are It; but if you have no other claim to confidence and love, the jumping-off place you should seek, and give yourself a shove. I'd rather keep a-plugging on, with little to disburse, and journey to the boneyard in the county poor farm's hearse, and have folks say I tried my best to do my little part, than leave a lot of rocks behind, and not a mourning heart.

Business Prose - Poems

Getting a Habit

WHEN I was but a little lad I used to watch the men fill up their trusty briar pipes, and smoke, and smoke again. "Man's highest aim," I thought, "is just to make tobacco burn;" and so I swiped an old clay pipe, and started in to learn. Ods fish! the anguish I endured! The gasping, choking breaths! I curled me up behind the barn, and died a hundred deaths; and father found me writhing there, and stood me on my head, and lammed me with a barrel stave till I was nearly sped; and mother shamed me sore, and said: "The world for ruin's ripe, since I've become the parent of a fiend who smokes a pipe." Yet dauntless was their noble boy, untamed and undismayed; I quickly got another pipe—when can my glory fade? I cried aloud, sustained and soothed by an unswerving trust: "I am the captain of my soul, and I will smoke or bust." And so the day of triumph came, and I could smoke, and smoke, without becoming so distressed that I was fit to croak. Ah, many weary years since then have flown with ruthless speed, and I've burned up a million pipes and ninety tons of weed; and I have tried so hard to quit—and I have tried in vain; and so the small boy's courage gives the veteran a pain.

Business Prose - Poems

The Harvest

LIFE is pretty cheap and yellow, and it often bores a fellow, if he thinks about his troubles through the long and weary day, if he talks about his sorrows, laying bets that all to-morrows will be just as stale and sombre, just as grewsome and as gray. Ah, the world is what we make it; if we fuss around and rake it, hustling for a crop of trouble, we'll have windows high and wide; but it will not pay for reaping, and the thrashers will be weeping when they see the scurvy harvest that has been your boast and pride. If you fire all thoughts of sadness, and go raking round for gladness, if you just insist that worry take its grip and trunk, and roam, you are sure to find the mowing pays for all the work and sowing, and the thrashers will be whooping on the day of Harvest Home. All my metaphors are tangled, and this rhyme is badly jangled, but you'll doubtless catch its meaning if you use a hook and line; do not mind the ills that bore you, nor the clouds that threaten o'er you; every day provides its solace, and to-morrow will be fine!

Business Prose - Poems

Saturday Night.

NOW the week of toil and grinding closes with the fading day, and the lines of men are winding on their cheerful homeward way.

And I watch them, heavy hearted, as the twilight shadows fall; in the week that is departed I have done no good at all. True, I've made a lot of money, but can any creature say that I made his life more sunny as he toiled upon his way? I have sold some houses dearly, I have made some trades in land, but I can't remember clearly that I gave a helping hand. I have loaned to those who borrow, I have made some debtors bleed; but in sombre homes of sorrow I have done no kindly deed. I have worn the victor's laurels in the markets of the town, but had naught but empty morals for the man who's stricken down. At the banks I've done my duty; all my business debts are paid; but in twilight's hush and beauty all my sordid triumphs fade. Gain is but a worthless leaven of the larger human plan, for a soul approaches heaven as he helps his fellow man.

Business Prose - Poems

Croesus

HE has a most unseemly pile; the land is his for mile on mile; he has a mansion on the hill, and at its foot he has a mill; and miners tunnel underground, to swell his fortune, pound by pound. You'd think his life should be a joy, a dream of bliss without alloy. You'd think he ought to dance and yell from happiness, but, truth to tell, in spite of all that he is worth, he is the saddest man on earth. His wealth will buy him farms and lots, and private cars and princely yachts, and it will bring, from far and near, the homage of the insincere; it will control the hands and brains of legions toiling for his gains, but in the whole world's busy mart, it will not buy a loving heart; it will not buy, until the end, what most he needs on earth—a friend.

Business Prose - Poems

Pipe Dreams.

WHEN I was digging ditches, I used to long for riches, I thought that I'd be happy if I had coin to burn; I saw the wealthy speeding along the road unheeding; they blew in more for stogies than I knew how to earn. When I was loading gravel, I longed and longed to travel, to scoot in palace coaches, or sail across the sea; I said: "I have to labor like thunder while my neighbor, is blowing in his bundle, as busy as a bee." And now with wealth I'm loaded; alas! it seems corroded; it doesn't seem to glitter the way it ought to do; my life is soft and easy, but I am fat and wheezy, I spend my days in yawning, and I am tired and blue. It's tiresome to be wealthy; it's better to be healthy, with springing, active muscles, no spavins on your legs; I wish that I could travel back to the days of gravel, when I could eat a bushel of good old ham and eggs!

Business Prose - Poems

The Hard Luck Man.

MY luck is fierce," in anguish wailed the man who forty times had failed; "the gods that guide poor mortals' feet have soaked me often, and repeat. All things upon this whirling sphere go wrong end foremost when I'm near; if I had luck, like other guys, you'd see me like an airship rise; I'll bet a twenty-cent cigar I'd hitch my wagon to a star." I've noticed that the men who fail spring that old story, worn and stale; they never hand you out the truth; they never say: "I failed, forsooth, because I am a dizzy shirk; I hate to buckle down to work; I'd always let my business slide to take a joyous motor ride, or watch an organ grinder's tricks, or fuss around in politics. Good Honest Toil may be the rage; I pass it up, at every stage; the bread of labor makes me ache; I'd rather shake the dice for cake." The hard luck yarn is always known wherever has-beens meet and moan. The fellows who are sawing wood, and baling hay, and making good put up no quitter's sob or worse, when they encounter a reverse; they take fresh grips on life and climb, and, get there somehow, every time.

Business Prose - Poems

Selfishness.

DO not tell me doleful stories of the city's poor, I say, for I'm thinking of the glories of the car I bought today. She's a beauty and a hummer; nothing finer passes by; and I'll have some fun this summer or I'll know the reason why. There's a widow needs assistance? There are children starving near? Friend, I wish you'd keep your distance, with your stories bleak and drear. It is anything but pleasant, and it gives my nerves a jar, when I'm busy, as at present, cranking up my motor car. There are workmen standing idle, and they have no place to dine? Friend, I'm going to the bridal of a lady friend of mine. I have bought her gems and lilies, and I cannot spare the cash that would fix your weary Willies with a bellyful of hash. Do not urge and do not press me—and I think it's mean and low, thus to worry and distress me, with you dismal tales of woe. There's a poor old woman weeping, that her sons have strayed afar, and in want her watch she's keeping? Well, just hand her this cigar. Ah, this life would shine and glisten like a snow wreath on the moor, if we didn't have to listen to these spiels about the poor!

Business Prose - Poems

The Grouch

IT'S all very well to be nursing a grouch, when everything travels awry, and you haven't the pieces-of-eight in your pouch to pay for a cranberry pie; it's all very well to use language galore, and cover your whiskers with foam; you may prance around town with a head that is sore—but it's beastly to carry it home! You may be discouraged and worn by the strife; then make all your kicks on the street, for the man who will wear out his grouch on his wife, isn't fit for a cannibal's meat; if troubles and worries are beating you down, and bringing gray hairs to your dome, 'twill do in the office to carry a frown, but it's ghoulish to carry it home! The Lord, who made sparrows and Katy H. Dids, loves the man who is stalwart and brave, who cheerily goes to his wife and his kids, though his hopes may be fit for the grave; but the Lord has no use for the twenty-cent skate, whose courage is weak as the foam; who piles up his sorrows, and shoulders the weight, and carefully carries it home!

Business Prose - Poems

Dreary Old Age

I 'M growing old. That fact forlorn brings to my eyes the tears. The music of the dinner horn no longer charms my ears. I'm summoned to the groaning board, and go with dragging feet, and languidly I take my sword and carve the fragrant meat. I nibble at the stately roast, I care not for the hash; I am not hungry for the toast, the eggs or succotash. And when I've eaten something hot my stomach breaks its thills, and ties itself into a knot and makes demand for pills. Ah me! Ah you! Ah Richard Roe! I full of yearnings am for dear, dead days of long ago, when I could eat a ham! When I was young my appetite was equal to the fray; I ate all day and dreamed all night of grub that got away. And when I heard the brass horn's screams that called to meat and pie, I vaulted over trees and streams, and fences eight feet high. No longer comfort do I find in dinner trumpet's blare; nor do I with contended mind discuss the bill of fare.

Business Prose - Poems

Brooding

I SIT sometimes at night alone, and think about my stock of woes, until my bosom sheds a groan, and briny tears run down my nose. I think about the slights and slurs that I've endured throughout the day, and wail: "Man gets but cockle-burs, when thinking that he's buying hay." The more I think along this line, and dig up sorrows by the peck, the more my eyes produce the brine, until it slops adown my neck. And then the hausfrau comes along, and says: "Why are you mooning here? Great Caesar," says she, "sing a song, and can the sob and flowing tear! No Injun in this bailiwick," the hausfrau says, with chiding glance, "has blessings round him half so thick, so hump yourself and sing and dance! It gives me seven yellow pains," the hausfrau argues, as she stands, "to see a man possessed of brains brood o'er his woes and wring his hands. Forget you griefs," the hausfrau cries, "forget your grievances and fears; I hate to see your pickled eyes, and mark your whiskers, soaked with tears." Then I forget my soul's turmoil, and buckle down and mow the lawn; and any man who tackles toil will find his fears and sorrows gone.

Business Prose - Poems

The Misanthrope

I USED to hate my fellow-men; I sat and grumbled in my den, and railed at human life; I said that hearts were full of guile—I know my own was full of bile, my thoughts were all of strife. I said that no one in the land would e'er extend a helping hand to any wayworn friend, or aid some pilgrim to the front unless he knew the kindly stunt would pay him in the end. Then I fell sick with boils and hives, and all the neighbors and their wives came prancing to my lair; they brought me jam and marmalade and mixed me horns of lemonade and dope beyond compare. They fed me wienerwurst and chow and gently fanned my fevered brow, when I was growing worse, and told me if I had to croak they'd see the undertaker bloke and cough up for a hearse. They watched beside my lowly bed, and fixed the poultice on my head, and when they thought I'd die they looked as sad as though they knew that I was worth a cent or two; some even paused to cry. The folks we see from day to day may seem to go their selfish way, intent on private aim; but when real kindness is desired to help some mortal sick and tired, you'll see them in the game.

Business Prose - Poems

The Store Talksmith

I WENT into a hardware store to buy a quire of nails. The clerk I dealt with was a bore, who told me dreary tales. He wore a large elastic smile that split his face in two; his jaw was going all the while, and when his stunt was through, I cried: "Cut out these verbal gales! Let all this talk be tinned! Lo, when a patron comes for nails, you only hand him wind!" I went into the druggist's lair, to buy some pickled smoke; a languid salesman met me there, and said: "Say, here's a joke!" And then he slammed me on the back, and leaned against my bust, and quoted from some almanac a joke all red with rust. And then I smote him with a chair and knocked him through the floor, determined as I left that lair, to go there never more. Oh, when will buoyant salesmen learn to give their jaws a rest, and know that customers don't yearn for quip and ancient jest? Ah, how I love the quiet clerk, who sells me sealing wax, and keeps his mind upon his work, and sidesteps almanacs!

Business Prose - Poems

The Eminent Divine

I NTO our little burg there came a minister of world-wide fame who preached for half an hour; his sermon surely was a scream; it touched upon a vital theme, and throbbed with force and power. The folks from all the countryside had come to hear the pulpit's pride hand out some words of cheer; he drew big money for his speech—for less than that our pastor'd preach a quarter of a year. I saw our pastor standing by, with admiration in his eye, a humble, shrinking man, who labors with us day by day, and does his best to show the way, and teach salvation's plan. Our pastor knows what hunger's like; he makes long journeys on the pike to spring his gospel dope; he lifts the mourner's drooping head, and prays beside the dying bed of sinners shorn of hope. He knows us and our little sins; he tells us of the scheme that wins forgiveness in the end; he's been our comrade through the years, he shares our triumphs and our tears, he is our bully friend. God bless him in his humble path! I'll bet he cuts a wider swath than all these surpliced lads, the church's famed and gifted stars who scoot around in private cars and lecture for the seads!

Business Prose - Poems

In the Kitchen.

I OFTEN drop my helpful book to watch fair Arabella cook. No weary kitchen drudge is she; she cooks with gladsome ecstasy. I've seen her take some flour and grease, and then produce a masterpiece. With soul inspired and glowing eye she makes the pudding and the pie; when from the oven she will take some lovely and triumphant cake she feels the rapture that is known by geniuses, and they alone. And when we gather round the board and view with joy the tempting hoard of things that make our stomachs gay, we hand the cook a large bouquet. Jemima hasn't learned to cook; she paints large pictures of a brook; and pea green cattle stand therein, 'neath bughouse trees with leaves of tin; and crimson crows are soaring by, beneath a stretch of brindled sky; the sun, that shines on bird and beast, is sinking slowly in the east. We turn away, with sinking heart, from fair Jemima's stunt in art, give her the jolt that she deserves, and watch sweet Arabella's curves.

Business Prose - Poems

Weariness

I 'M tired of Jack London's tales of death in the Arctic snows, where the blizzard cavorts and wails, and freezes the pilgrim's nose. I'm tired of his Yukon flood, the husky and sled and barge; I'm tired of his tubs of blood, and butchers who roam at large. I'm tired of the Curwood folk, who slaughter and howl and screech; I'm tired of the bowie stroke, I'm weary of Rex E. Beach. I've soured on the cowboy camp, where the gun men make their plays; I'm sick of the cows that tramp around on the plains and graze. I'm tired of the gifted sleuth, so skillful and smooth and wise, who digs up the hidden truth from its grave in a stack of lies. I'm tired of the stories coarse of life in the crowded flat; of narratives of divorce, and "studies" of this and that. I blow in my fifteen cents for a popular magazine, and sit by my garden fence and read till I'm sore and mean. The stories of smut and mud, the stories of vice's chain, the stories of tubs of blood, all give me a convex pain. The yarns of the dive and slum, the stories of fashion's sins, the stories of thief and bum, of Wallingford guile that wins, all give me a dark green ache deep down in my troubled mind. Ah me, that a man would make one book of the good old kind!

Business Prose - Poems

Worth While.

I SAT one day in my figtree's shade, and watched a man as he plied his spade. The man was old and his steps were weak, and deep were the furrows upon his cheek. I grieved for him as he bravely wrought, for his task was hard and the day was hot; and the paltry wage that the diggers get won't buy them napkins to dry their sweat. "Old man," I said, with a friendly smile, "do you really think that your life's worth while?" With red bandana he mopped his head, and leaned his weight on his spade and said: "I am the happiest man in town! Last night I married the Widow Brown!" Then the bridegroom turned to his yawning ditch, and his heart was glad and his life was rich. It often happens, methinks, that those who draw our sympathy for their woes, get more from life than we pampered guys who feed on lobsters and shrimps and pies.

Business Prose - Poems

Coronation

THE king sits high on his nobby throne, and knights and ladies of high degree will smile or blanch at his lightest tone and bow and grovel and bend the knee. There's glowing splendor on every hand, it is a stirring and dazzling scene; and peers and princes of every land have come to jolly the king and queen. But the face of the monarch is sad and worn—the face of a man who has seldom laughed; perhaps he thinks it a thing to mourn that he was called to the reigning graft. Perhaps he envies the man who digs, the man who dwells in a humble cot, with his muley cow and his bunch of pigs, and his apple tree and his garden plot. He may have dreams of a quiet life, afar from diamonds and thrones and silk, with his barefoot kids and his happy wife, who sings while skimming the morning milk. To ride to town on a load of hay and get two pun at the village scales may seem far better than holding sway o'er England, Scotland, and Cork and Wales. To live your life in the blinding glare that beats for aye on a throne and crown—ah, better to ride on an old roan mare, and carry three dozen of eggs to town! The faces of kings are always sad, their eyes are heavy, their whiskers gray; their souls are sick of the reigning fad—they'd like to ride on a load of hay.

Business Prose - Poems

National Anthems

THEY'RE getting up a princely purse, and they will give it to the bard who writes some patriotic verse—who hits his lyre, and hits it hard. The anthems that we now possess are clanging things of brass or zinc; they cause the singers great distress, and drive the listeners to drink. And hence they're digging up a roll to stir up some Byronic sharp, to cause some nobly gifted soul to knock the stuffing from his harp. And now the poets in their dens will gird their loins in proper style, and charge their trusty fountain pens, and turn out anthems by the mile. And when the judges sit in state upon these hand-made songs to pass, they'll doubtless find that none is great, and all resemble sounding brass. A man may write such dope as mine for money, marbles, chalk or fun, but when he'd rise to strains divine he will not do it for the mon. Some day some tiller of the sod, unlettered, toil-worn and obscure, alone with Silence, Night and God, may write a song that will endure.

Business Prose - Poems

The True Reward

THE swatting season soon will close,
and we'll enjoy well earned repose.
I look around with tearful eyes,
upon my stock of swatted flies, and
feel my toil was labor lost. The flies aren't
worth half what they cost. A while I mur-
mur and repine, and then my eyes begin
to shine, and happiness pervades my
breast. I say: "I surely did my best! I
did my task with willing hand, and swatted
flies to beat the band, and though my dead,
when in a pile, makes more accomplished
swattists smile, I smote the flies that I
could reach, and Conscience tells me I'm a
peach." To do your best—there honor
lies! At sawing wood or swatting flies, at
writing poems or raising greens, or mak-
ing coffee out of beans—your soul will
know the sweetest rest, if you will always
do your best! We feel discouraged when
we view the windrow when the day is
through; we saw the other mowers pass;
their arms were strong, they cut more
grass; they greeted us with clammy stares
—but our reward's as great as theirs when
come the evening hours of rest, if we have
only done our best.

Business Prose - Poems

The Rash Lover

REGGIE, you're a fine young fellow, but you're bound to have your way, and you'll marry Arabella spite of all that I can say. Though advice from me is futile, since you're firm as any rock, though the things I say seem brutal, yet I've simply got to talk. Arabella is a daisy, smoothest girl I ever saw; but the neighbors say she's lazy, and she will not help her ma. She is stylish, she is classy, and her eyes are simply grand; but the people say she's sassy to her mother, understand? I have lived and loved and suffered, and I've found it is the law that no sane, well-balanced duffer'd wed a girl who'll sass her ma. She may have a thousand graces to adorn her fair young life, but you'll find she'll bust the traces when you get her for a wife. You had better hunt some other damsel in this country wide, for a girl who'll sass her mother will gold brick you as a bride.

Business Prose - Poems

Nat Goodwin

HE'S writing books about the lives of all his plain and fancy wives. A few of them he may forget, but all the rest are in a sweat, for Nat, his heart devoid of ruth, declares he'll tell the ghastly truth. Since girls are bound to marry Nat, they'll have to stand for things like that. To wed that sassy Goodwin lad has got to be a sort of fad, which shows a low, degraded taste, for other games are far more chaste. The women of this modern day consider life a giddy play; to find amusement as they go is all the yearning that they know. When I was young the sober dames bent o'er their trusty quilting frames, and made straw bonnets, day by day, to send to heathen in Cathay; they brewed yarb tea and put up jam, and cured the large and luscious ham. Alas, unlike the old time dames, the modern girls have trifling aims; to drink champagne at gilded bars, to ride around in motor cars, to send to Paris for a hat, to smoke cheroots and marry Nat—this is the circle of their lives, such is the limelight brand of wives.

Business Prose - Poems

Hunting Grief

MY home should be a home of peace; there everything is slick as grease. The wolves don't have a chance to roar around my handsome cottage door—they soon would get it in the neck; the horn of plenty is on deck; the larder's full of cake and jam, and codfish balls and shredded ham. The hausfrau and her bunch of kids would be as gay as katydids, if I could but my home enjoy, and not let outside ills annoy. But I must fret my derved fool soul o'er such things as Alaska's coal, the wiles of those blamed Guggenheims, and Rockefellermorgan's crimes. The wicked tariff makes me sweat; our naval needs I can't forget, and when I hear that Hobson man predicting warfare with Japan, all sunshine leaves my haunted life, and I get up and beat my wife. I can't indulge in harmless chaff; I can't enjoy my phonograph; I can't return my wife's kind looks, or get much comfort from my books, because the referendum fake has filled me with a blue roan ache. What blooming fools we mortals be! With Old Bill Shakespeare I agree. Our lives might be serene and calm, and Gilead would give its balm, if we from grief would step aside, and take the gifts the gods provide.

Business Prose - Poems

Foolish Anger

YOU fly in a passion and roar in fool fashion when something or other goes wrong, and people who hear you regret they are near you, and wish you would mosey along. Man's never so foolish, disgusting and mulish as when he is prancing in wrath; and yet, in his snorting and silly cavorting, he thinks he is cutting a swath. I don't mind the clangor of justified anger—a man has a right to be mad when standing a session of wrong and oppression by men who are spiteful and bad. And when he is hotter than simmering water, he ought to go up in the air, and kick out a girder and yell bloody murder, and bust a suspender and swear. But he who goes raving and pawing and caving whenever by trifles upset, deserves a good whacking; he shows that he's lacking the sense to come out of the wet.

Business Prose - Poems

Spare the Flies

O H swatter, hold your hand, I beg,
and do not slay that humble fly
that tickles you with active leg—
why should the lovely creature
die? The Force that gave you life and
breath designed that fly, so blithe and gay;
who gave you powers of life and death?
Who said that you might freely slay? Be-
cause some scientists insist that flies bear
germs from place to place, you take a blud-
geon in your fist and would exterminate the
race. The germs and flies have equal
rights with men enjoyment to pursue, and
so have skeeters, which, at nights, oft
charm us with their loud bazoo. I hold
that any living thing has title deeds as
good as ours, to loaf around this world and
sing, and sip the honey from the flowers.
And when I see some husky guy take lethal
arms and fiercely pounce upon some unsus-
pecting fly, that does not weigh a half an
ounce, I feel that I'd set up cigars, or buy
the lime juice by the tub, if some big mon-
ster came from Mars, and soaked him with
a twelve-foot club. When next you go to
swat a fly, imagine that the monster came
—some freak a thousand cubits high, and
held a club above your frame!

Business Prose - Poems

The Healer

ARE you full of grief, my neighbor,
full of grief and woe? Shed your
raiment, then, and labor, and your
cares will go. Is your bosom torn
asunder, that you thus repine? Friends of
mine who work like thunder haven't time
to whine. Idlers stand about me weep-
ing, men with empty hands; and the happy
men are reaping o'er the fertile lands.
Life's a thing of cruel rigor for the shift-
less knaves; kind for men who work with
vigor, not as galley slaves. Foolish your
complaint and wailing, foolish are your
tears; work's the cure for all your ailing,
and your griefs and fears. Work at anvil
or at throttle, saw your pile of wood!
Never bought you in a bottle remedy so
good! Work, on land or on the ocean, go
and cut some grass! Never was there pili
or potion that was in work's class! Work's
the solace for the mortal by life's ills dis-
traught; it will make him sing and chortle,
it will hit the spot! Be you statesman,
soldier, bard or tiller of the soil, if you're
tired of work, work harder! Nothing heals
like toil!

Business Prose - Poems

The Suffragists

DOUBTLESS dames deserve the ballot and the other things they wish. I won't stand around and argue—I had rather go and fish. I have met the suffrage women, listened to their tale of hope, but not one of all the legion could persuade me to elope. I can listen quite politely while such dames explain their dream, but I'd never buy them peanuts or invite them to ice cream. I can seem quite sympathetic while the suffragist orates, but I'd never want to take her for a whirl on roller skates. It is strange that lovely damsels who don't care a whoop for votes always have as many lovers as a husbandman has shoats; men admire them and adore them; lovers fret away their lives till they have secured a promise from these girls to be their wives. Why are men so blind and foolish, marrying these trifling girls, who have naught to recommend them but their starry eyes and curls? Why not hang the orange blossoms on the noble suffrage dames, with their tragic eyes and voices and their missions and their aims? Why not wed some worthy relic with her sex's good in view, rather than some blushing maiden who has charming eyes of blue?

Business Prose - Poems

What Is Beer

DOC WILEY'S called on to decide the pregnant question: "What is beer?" He'll split the subject open wide and hand a verdict down this year. He might consult some dreary bum who has a dark and mournful tale of how from affluence he's come to occupy a cell in jail. Beer is a good and harmless drink if you but let the stuff alone; while bottled up, like purple ink, it never caused a sigh or groan. But if you pour it down your throat, one bottle clamors for its mate; it starts right in to get your goat, and it will get it, soon or late. This drink in which such virtue lies, will fill your head with aches and pains, and give you puffed and crimson eyes, and scatter cobwebs through your brains. On energy it puts the crepe; in useful work you hate to launch; it puts new outlines on your shape until it leaves you mostly paunch. It spoils your appetite for food—beer, beer alone is all you beg—the good old brew, from glass or wood—until you are a human keg. And when your love for beer you lose, because it fails to hit the spot, you fondly turn to stronger booze, and drink it till your insides rot.

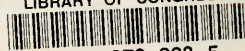


OCT 13 1911

One copy del. to Cat. Div.

OCT 13 1911

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 015 973 923 5